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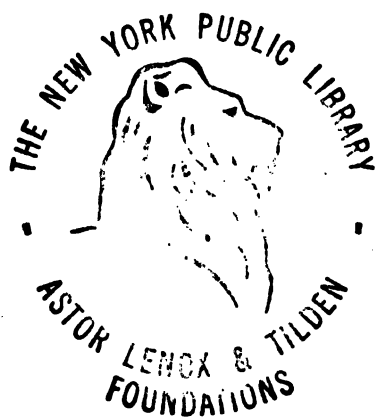
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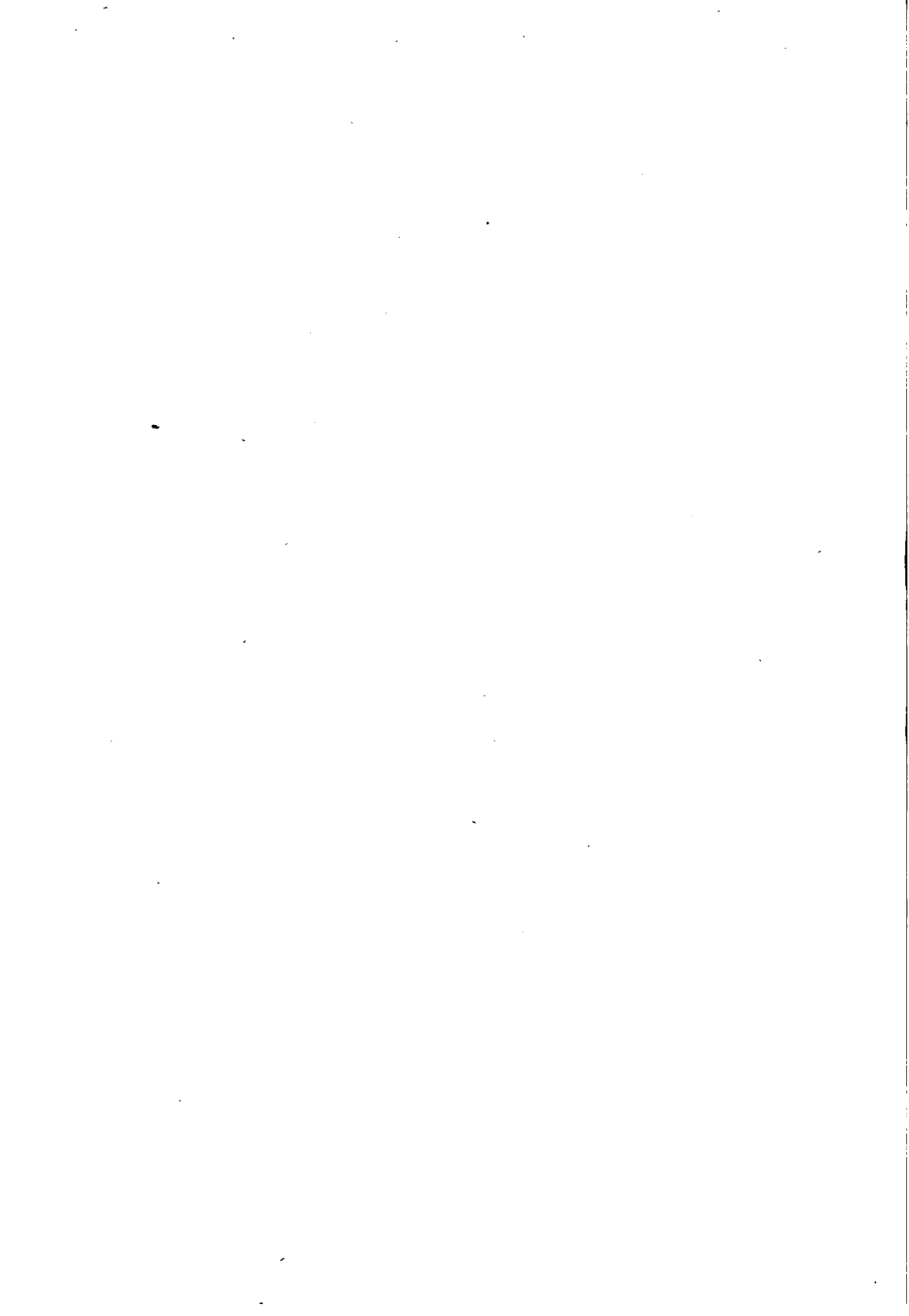
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## **AN UNCONSCIOUS CRUSADER**

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# AN UNCONSCIOUS CRUSADER

BY

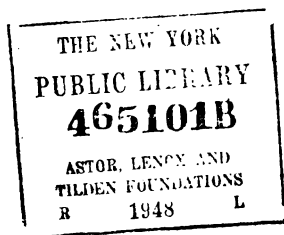
SIDNEY WILLIAMS

Author of

"A Reluctant Adam" and "The Eastern Window"



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“For if the trumpet give an uncertain voice, who shall prepare himself for war?”

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# AN UNCONSCIOUS CRUSADER

## CHAPTER I

Detachment without estrangement is seldom achieved — with persons or places. Radbourne felt himself above Waterwick. That the tacit antagonism between himself and the average villager was largely his own creation never entered his head. Nor was it evident to him that he was the only sufferer in his ban on Waterwick's maidens, cut off because a girl he fancied preferred the town's conspicuous dandy — a callow youth who played tennis at Princeton. Radbourne himself had two years at a freshwater college and the eminence of a local correspondent behind him.

Of late he had considered "getting into journalism." It was less the call of a high mission than desire to be wholly free from Waterwick. Its people were narrow. Their intellectual horizon was a Moody and Sankey hymn book. He yearned for freedom. For that reason he was on his way to Fordport with a telegraphic summons that somehow required frequent reading. He examined it again, and counted telegraph poles as the stertorous engine hurried his train of destiny onward. A simple telegram:

James Radbourne,  
Waterwick, N. Y.

Let me see you to-day. Important.

G. W. LEWIS,  
Fordport *Globe*.

He had received the message two hours before and had hastened to respond. Lewis, he knew, was the managing editor of the *Globe*, for Hayes, a district man on the *New York Times* with whom he had sometimes worked, also covered occasional matters for the *Globe*.

As Radbourne pondered his perplexity increased. "I wonder what Lewis can want of me," he mused. "How did he hear of me? It isn't likely that the editor of a big hustling paper like the *Globe* would telegraph an inexperienced man to get him for his staff, when hundreds of capable fellows are always haunting newspaper offices in search of jobs. Well, if I keep on guessing I won't know, so I'll just give it up."

As he left the station at Fordport, he made his way through a swarm of beckoning taxi drivers, and busy newsboys who rent the air with shrieks of,—

"*Globe!* Last edition! 7:35!"

It was not yet four o'clock. The sun still rode high in the sky.

"What do you mean by yelling '7:35' when it isn't four yet?" he asked a boy, as he exchanged a penny for a *Globe* fresh from the press.

"'Cause 'tis the 7:35," the boy retorted.

"But what does it mean?" Radbourne persisted.

"Don't know," the boy responded laconically. The question wiser people were unable to solve.

As he made his way with the guidance of a policeman to the square in the heart of the city, where the *Globe* kept its finger on the public pulse, he noted with vague satisfaction that it seemed to have the call with newsboys.

It took vocal prominence over shrieks of *Times*, *Advertiser*, and *Courier*.

A broad sign with an inscription in gold-leaf indicated the office he sought. On either side of the street door big bulletin boards with stencilings in red, black, and blue announced that the "Giants" had bought "Bo" Puffball, the eminent pitcher; that a Chicago millionaire had been shot down at his door, and Mme. Treville, the famous dancer, had eloped with the Very Rev. Dr. Black. As Radbourne paused momentarily in the gaping crowd, a shock-headed boy appeared from within and pasted a new slip which doubled the loss in a New York fire.

Radbourne followed a beckoning hand which pointed up a long flight of stairs, to a door with "Editorial Rooms" painted on it. There was neither bell nor boy, so he pushed the door open and stepped in. He saw a great room of irregular shape, as though several offices had been thrown together by merely ripping out partitions. In corners were stray tables or desks, none of them ornate. A large table in the center was piled with dusty books, umbrellas, newspaper files, hats, cigar and cigarette stubs and other things. Along the walls were shelves filled with books, large and heavy. They could not be easily classified, but Radbourne saw a red one with "Who's Who in America" stamped across it. In a boxed-up corner a telegraph instrument was ringing out the last wire despatches of the day, while the operator furiously pounded his typewriter. One or two other young men were tapping typewriters; but the general air was one of ease.

No one seemed to notice Radbourne's entrance, and with some hesitation he approached a desk near the door.

A short man whose eyes were concealed by a green shade sat there, vigorously wielding a blue pencil as he waded through a mass of copy and tossed folded sheets into a box by his side, with terse headlines. Presently he paused and glanced at Radbourne inquiringly, disclosing the fact that he was thin and dark, with brown eyes and hair. His expression was resentful.

"Is Mr. Lewis in?" Radbourne asked.

"I think so. Just look into the little office next the street." Without further parley he resumed his editing of copy.

Following the direction, Radbourne came to a previously unnoticed retreat. In a far corner a sort of den was screened from the general office by sheathing which did not reach the ceiling. He knocked on the door, and entered in response to a voice calling,— "Come along."

Filling the den so that one hesitated to enter, a tall, portly man leaned back in a swivel chair while his generously proportioned feet rested on his desk. His heavy blonde moustache seemed to have robbed the scanty fringe around his cranium. Glasses aided a pair of round blue eyes which looked placid content. A largely consumed cigar protruded from a corner of his mouth, as he gently puffed and cut with shining scissors a sheet of paper into bits. Radbourne's general impression was that the man was indolent and affable.

"I wanted to see Mr. Lewis," he explained with a survey of corners where a small person might lurk.

"I'm Lewis," said the stout man, slowly putting down his feet. "What can I do for you?"

"I came in response to your telegram. I am James Radbourne of Waterwick."

"Oh, yes," said Lewis with a slow handshake. "I suppose you wonder what I want of you."

"It was rather a puzzler," Radbourne assented, with sudden shrinkage of enthusiasm. The stout man was not the impressive personage he had anticipated as managing editor of the *Globe*.

"Well, I want you to work for us. One of our men has suddenly quit without notice to accept a job in Europe; and a second, Littlefield, leaves us in the lurch to grab more salary on the *Times*. Now what have you done in newspaper work?"

Radbourne caught his breath in surprise. It seemed hardly possible that the opening he had longed for could come begging like this. But he steadied himself to reply calmly:

"A fair amount of court reporting for papers in my county; special work for one or two New York papers, mostly descriptive articles and interviews. And county correspondence for the Fordport *Times*."

"Hm," Lewis remarked as he sucked his cigar. "I didn't know you did anything for the *Times*. Are you up on any special topic?"

"I'm pretty well up on politics," Radbourne said. "I've taken an interest in them since I was a youngster, and know something about the game. Our congressman, Talcott, is an old friend of mine, and taught me a good deal. Perhaps you know him?"

Lewis nodded assent, and waited expectantly.

"I can do fairly well with music, I think," Radbourne went on. "I've always fancied it, studied its literature and heard as many good things as I could. When I was in New York last winter, I wrote a few small reviews for

a friend who is a music critic. He was kind enough to say they were decent."

"Anything more?" Lewis queried. "No. Well, I'll tell you what we'll do. Littlefield has been doing City Hall, and I have personally covered the musical events. Don't like to, but there isn't a man on the staff who distinguishes between a two-step and a sonata. We haven't felt like hiring a man for that alone, and I don't like the air-castles offered by musicians. I'll have you cover City Hall and the music, and give you twenty-five a week. To-day is Wednesday. Can you come on Monday?"

"But," Radbourne protested, "you don't know anything about me!"

"Oh, we old fellows know a man when we see one," Lewis said with a smile. "Besides I do know about you. Hayes told me enough before I wired. Will you come Monday?"

"I'll be glad to," Radbourne said.

"Very well. Better come in Friday, if you can, and get the run of your beat. I've just time to catch my car." As he closed the arrangement Lewis was reaching for his hat. A minute later Radbourne stood on the street corner, pinching himself to find if he dreamed.

As he picked his way back to the station, he saw Hayes walking leisurely some distance ahead and hurried to catch him. "Say," he inquired, as he clapped his hand on Hayes's shoulder, "don't you think you're rash?"

"How?" the older man inquired with a faint gleam of amusement in his eyes.

"Why, getting me that chance with the *Globe*. Aren't you afraid I'll flunk and ruin your reputation as a



prophet? I've never had the experience necessary to stand up to such a contract."

"Take it?" asked Hayes.

"Sure," answered Radbourne, "but —"

"No 'buts,'" Hayes said brusquely. "You can handle it all right. Haven't I known what you could do since the Cloyes' case? You must take hold of this place for your credit and mine. Good-by. I'll look in when you're settled."

Before Radbourne could thank him, he hailed a passing trolley and disappeared within.

On the homeward trip Radbourne carefully reviewed the situation. He knew his father would oppose acceptance of the position, for he wanted him to read for the bar and had viewed his ventures in journalism with disfavor. But of late he had felt growing dislike for law's technicalities, and grinding application previously unperceived. Then, small journalistic experience had given him a roseate impression of the pleasures and power of the Fourth Estate. He felt his fitness for it. By the time he reached his home station he was fully determined to go to the *Globe*, despite domestic opposition. He would not turn his back on an opening much better than he had expected.

Radbourne's twenty-two years were worn with gravity which caused strangers to add at least five. Since his mother's death, four years before, he had grown more taciturn, accentuating passive firmness to the point of obstinacy. He felt no misgivings lest his present resolution be thwarted.

The point was won with unexpected ease. His father neither stormed nor pleaded.

"Well," he said after a brief silence, "you're of age. I don't suppose I could stop you if I tried. I wanted you to be a lawyer. But it's no use, if your heart isn't in it. Your grandfather was bound to make a minister of me, and I'm a lumber dealer. We've got to thresh things out for ourselves. Maybe you'll be a first-rate newspaper man. When do you want to go?"

"I promised to be there Monday."

"That's all right," the elder Radbourne observed, as he looked at his watch and regained his feet slowly. For a moment he stood, his hands on his son's shoulders, and regarded him with open tenderness. Then he was gone with a simple wish that expressed a blessing,—“The best of luck, Jim.”

As he went to his room Radbourne felt somehow a little ashamed.

## CHAPTER II

Friday morning Radbourne delivered his trunk to the driver of Waterwick's sole hack, and prepared to take his last look at the village. That was the tenor of his thoughts, as he strolled along Main Street and planned for journalistic success with the assurance of youth.

Waterwick was a stiff and staid little town. Once a flourishing center for several stage lines, it had collapsed commercially with the advent of a railroad that was to it little more than bisection by steel. In a small woolen mill, its only industrial enterprise, Waterwick took great pride. The Episcopal church and the public library, a massive gift from a philanthropic but misguided native, who achieved fortune elsewhere and forgot that at home the trend of progress was toward the cemetery, were the show places of the community.

About the village common, sometimes used for baiting cows, clustered two general stores, the post office, an undertaking "emporium," and the village smithy. It was the business district. Beginning at a corner near the town well, ran Main Street with two or three decayed houses of colonial architecture and several smartly painted frame dwellings of modern aspect. They were occupied by the lawyers, the doctors, the storekeeper, the minister, and well-to-do daughters of dead somebodies, usually in aged pairs and called the "girls." This was Waterwick's aristocracy, the remnant of an old-time population whose influence in state, even national, councils was consider-

able. They were gone, and none to take their places.

Radbourne entered the train for Fordport with a sigh of relief.

As he rode he reviewed the situation. He felt that he was imperfectly equipped for urban journalism, especially for the important beat Lewis had given him. It was a promising position without the usual probationary period of suburban scribbling. He determined to attack it boldly, trusting to fortune for success. Of approved methods in newsgathering he knew little. But he remembered what Hayes had said when he once quizzed him on the subject:

"Newsgathering, Jim, is the art of securing friends in the proper places, to remember you when good material comes their way. We can't be everywhere, more than other people."

He had not the art of friendship possessed by his brother, whom many men and some women called "Billy" at first sight. But he resolved to cultivate people and force them to like him.

By the time he had settled upon a policy the train pulled into Fordport, and he faced the problem of securing a room. In his high school class had been an undersized farmer's boy, who later became a railroad clerk in Fordport and sometimes returned to show Waterwick the latest thing in hosiery. Radbourne determined to consult him. He found him poring over a huge ledger he seemed reluctant to leave.

"So you want a room," he remarked languidly. "Well, I don't know, I'm sure. Going to be here long?"

"I hope so," Radbourne said. "I'm to be the City Hall man on the *Globe*."

"'Deed. Well, you might come up to West Street where I am. Quite a decent quarter, and there's a room to be had directly across from my house. It's Number Three. Yes" — and he turned to the telephone where he chatted so long with "Mamie" that Radbourne left the office in disgust. He found Number Three and liked the room, somewhat because the sole occupant of the house was a maiden lady of discreet years and retiring manners. In an hour he had his trunk installed, and departed for the *Globe* without waiting to unpack.

Lewis sat in his office, chewing a cigar and cutting paper. "Hullo," he said; "glad you came in to get acquainted. Come out!" He led the way to the outer office and an unoccupied desk. "This was Littlefield's and will be yours, if you stay with us." Radbourne shut his teeth hard, and tried to look unconcerned. "Now I'll introduce you to Mr. Norman. He'll handle your copy and give you assignments." Radbourne found himself conducted to the desk of the busy man who had first indicated Lewis's quarters to him. He was more cordial now and shook hands with a smile, as he remarked, "I suppose you'll swamp me with copy."

"I'll try to be easy with you at first," Radbourne said.

"Do," Norman remarked, and turned to his work as though no one was within speaking distance.

"Mr. Watson," Lewis called. A short man with large eye-glasses and a miniature moustache scrambled to his feet and came forward. "This is Mr. Radbourne, who will take Littlefield's place at City Hall," Lewis announced. "He will relieve you next Monday. To-day I want you to introduce him along the beat. Post him on the rules of the paper."

As Lewis turned and strolled slowly back to his office, the little man stuffed a coat pocket with a wad of copy-paper that seemed to affect his balance, jammed his derby hat over his forehead, and set forth, sucking a pencil as he poured forth explanatory remarks to Radbourne regarding various streets and buildings. Presently they approached the City Hall, and entered its network of corridors. Their number gave Radbourne a sudden weakness at the knees.

"It looks rather tough to a greeny here, but it's easy when you get the combination," Watson remarked cheerfully. "Lewis doesn't fancy me here," he added. "He thinks I'm too devoted to a few offices where cigars and good stories abound." It was evident that Watson was popular, for he received a cordial welcome all the way from the mayor's office to the police station in the basement. They were all polite to the new reporter and profuse in assurances of friendship if he should command them. Radbourne felt that they were sizing him up, and wondered if he could establish the intimate footing enjoyed by Watson.

With brief calls at courts and various offices they made their way back to the *Globe*, Watson gathering an occasional item while Radbourne studied his style. Then he was made acquainted with the assignment book, where he would find each morning his special matters for investigation; a box for mail that already bore his name, and a printed slip which admonished *Globe* reporters to do or not to do certain things. There were rules in spelling, punctuation, and abbreviation, with a few hints on desired style of composition.

When this process had been continued for two days,

Radbourne felt that he was quite familiar with newspapers. He went to the office on Monday ready for a trial of his metal.

Following the example of other reporters, whom he met in off-hand fashion, he selected a copy of the morning edition and scanned its local columns while the assignment man labored on his book. When the other men jotted down their reminders from the big book flung on their common table, Radbourne did the same. Still further imitative, he stuffed a handful of paper in his pocket and strolled out. No one noticed him to-day. Every man was occupied with his own work, and he suddenly felt lonely. Assignments given him were few and unimportant, for with no knowledge of his capacity the city editor had sent two experienced men into his territory on promising pointers. He made the rounds and secured a few minor items, dry husks of routine. He felt somewhat abashed by a sense of failure until Norman remarked as he turned in a batch, "Pretty good for the first day. You'll grind out plenty when you get your feet in a bit."

The second day he met Littlefield, detailed for his old beat on the *Times*. He was a tall man of thirty or more, with a bushy moustache and an imperative voice. Radbourne thought he seemed to bully people for news.

"So you're working for the *Globe*," Littlefield said, with a sympathetic glance. "Piggish people. I couldn't stand them. Awfully unpopular paper. How are you finding it? Anything new?"

"Only a little driftwood," Radbourne said impassively. He detected a glint of satisfaction in Littlefield's eyes as he turned away. During the rest of the day he feverishly

followed him at a safe distance. When the last editions were out he lost no time in comparing the *Globe* and the *Times*. With a sigh of relief he assured himself that the *Times* had no scoop in his territory.

Next morning he resumed his task with a sense of having probed its difficulties. He felt professional as he ran up City Hall steps on his first round. From the city messenger he received a tip on a new quarantine station to be established by the board of health, an exclusive given because he was a new man. He had a pleasant vision of Littlefield's discomfiture as he jotted down the essential points for a story and hastened forth. On the second trip out from the office he met Watson near the door.

"Say," the little man called, "you're just the man to do me a favor. Aren't you?"

"If I can," Radbourne replied. "What is it?"

"I want you to go over to the Board of Trade and get a report from the secretary. It's all written and will give you no trouble. I have to see a man who is sure to be at City Hall in an hour, and I'll cover your beat while you are working for me. Do it?"

It was a simple thing, Radbourne thought, and he readily consented. An hour later he met Watson with the report and was assured the Hall was "dead." Together they strolled back to the office, and waited for the last edition.

The boy had scarcely distributed copies to the staff, who straightway searched for their stories, when the door of Lewis's office opened with a bang. An enraged deity, waving a paper. Without comment he threw it down on Radbourne's desk and waited, chewing his cigar with alarming vigor. It was the *Times*, and on the first page



Radbourne saw a double column head. He read it with ready comprehension that he was "stuck," in the parlance of the office.

"Veto. Mayor Robinson Admitted to a *Times* Reporter This Afternoon His Intention of Vetoing the Appropriation Bill at To-night's Meeting. Declines to Give Reasons."

"He said nothing about it at this morning's interview with me," Radbourne said somewhat feebly.

"And this afternoon," queried Lewis. Radbourne had not imagined he could be so freezing in his manner.

Watson cut in hurriedly, "I made the Hall rounds this afternoon, since Radbourne consented to cover an assignment for me. The Mayor wasn't in his office and I didn't look him up. He rarely gives out anything in the afternoon."

"Well?" said Lewis, his eyes fixed on Radbourne. He did not glance at Watson.

"It is as Mr. Watson explained," Radbourne said lamely.

"I'm not interested in Watson's explanations. He always has them, and he was always getting scooped at the Hall. That is why I put you there. You are responsible for its news, and no one else. I am disappointed in you. Don't let this happen again."

He turned and walked away, leaving Radbourne feeling that he had failed inexcusably, and ought to resign before he disgraced himself further. The little beat he had anticipated with pride was forgotten as he hastened from the office. Consoling remarks of those chastened more than once fell on heedless ears. He had yet to learn that in newspaperdom results, not intentions, count.

And one failure blots recollection of nine victories.

At first he told himself bitterly that Lewis was needlessly severe; but gradually came realization that only by strict discipline could a dependable news service be maintained. With dinner he lost some of his sorrow, and went to bed firmly resolved to watch for a chance to retrieve his standing with the chief.

For a few days news was dull. Then Radbourne had his opening. It came through work for a night man who yearned to attend a ball. Unused to tedious waiting for things to happen, he fell into a doze after midnight. Blair, the night editor, was in the composing-room, and the rest of the staff out on assignment.

The telephone rang sharply; then a second time as Radbourne awoke with a start, and reached for the receiver.

"*Globe?*" a voice was saying. "Yes. Is Blair there?"

"He's upstairs," said Radbourne. "Shall I call him?"

"No. You tell him," the voice went on. "I can't wait. Some one has just telephoned from Enfield to the central police station that a man has just been murdered at a farm house out there. That's all I can tell you. So don't call me up again. Tell Blair that Mitchell telephoned the tip."

Radbourne hung up the receiver with a tremor of anticipation, and rushed up to the composing-room, where Blair was placidly directing the makeup of a paper fully planned.

"Mitchell is a night operator," he said, when Radbourne caught his breath sufficiently to repeat the mes-

sage. "He often gives us tips, and you'd better call the police station to see what they will tell us. It's quarter of one, and I hope we don't have to send you out to Enfield. Ten miles to a howling wilderness."

From a sergeant at the station Radbourne could only learn that a murder had been committed, perhaps two. The police had a message saying a young man was killed and his mother dangerously wounded. There had been no time for investigation.

"You'll have to go," said Blair, when the information was conveyed to him. "The *Times* will spread, and we don't want to be beaten. Go up to Watson's room, and get him to help you. You are rather new to handle the thing alone."

Out into the night Radbourne rushed, pulling on his coat as he ran. Repeated raps at Watson's door brought a sleepy response. "Can't go," he mumbled. "Tell Blair I've got a bad cold, and to-night I took something for it. I'm afraid to go out in the night air."

"As usual," Blair said impatiently. "It is the last time I'll ever ask him to help me out. You'll have to go alone. But you can have the 'Baron' for odd jobs, if you want him. I've ordered a special trolley to take you to the edge of Enfield. There you'll have to scent the murder, and get to it in the best way. Don't wait to bring your story back. Telephone it from the car-barn. It's one fifteen, and I don't want to run much past three o'clock with the edition. Take the 'Baron,' and hustle."

The "Baron" was a fledgling who held copy for the proof-reader, carried advertising copy, and did errands for the staff. His title was derisive. Just now he felt very proud, and several times referred to "our assign-

ment " as they hurried across the square to a waiting car.

There were no regular cars to impede the special, as it bounded along the iron at a dizzy pace. Radbourne's thoughts raced chaotically, and refused to assemble in orderly plan of campaign. He knew his inexperience and the superior ability of Littlefield, who would probably cover for the *Times*. But he doggedly resolved to do his best. If he failed miserably, he would resign. But failure was out of the question.

At the car-barn he learned that two tramps, it was supposed, had killed a young farmer and his aged mother at a lonely farmhouse several miles away. A posse was searching for the murderers, who had two hours' start. His informant thought the dead man was a Barrows. Two men who took a sleigh from a neighboring livery stable a half hour earlier said something of the sort.

A vision of Littlefield already on the spot gave Radbourne a mental chill, and he hurried to the stable. With furious energy he pounded its closed door. A shock-headed boy thrust his head out of a window, after a time, and sleepily asked, "What?"

"Can you let me have a sleigh?" Radbourne called.

"In a minute," the boy answered, and soon slid back the stable door for Radbourne to enter. "Going to the murder, I guess," he remarked. "Do I know where it is? Sure. I've knowed Charlie Barrows since I was a kid."

"Then you'll drive me out there?" Radbourne said deferentially.

"Yep," and he hurried on the harness as though bound for a picnic. On the ride he told tales of Charlie's prowess until Radbourne began to think that nothing short

of a regiment could have subdued him. He had ample material for one phase of the story.

"We'll put up at Burbank's," said the boy, jerking his thumb towards a nearby farmhouse, "and go up to Charlie's on foot. It's only a little piece."

A second team stood in the yard, and through the window of a well-lighted room was visible the bulky form of Littlefield. Evidently the *Times* man was in the lead. With some hesitation Radbourne knocked. He was admitted by an elderly man, who inquired if he were a reporter, and ushered him into the room by the window of which Littlefield had been standing. He was still there with a man who introduced himself as the representative of a New York paper. A pudgy man Radbourne presently identified as the coroner appeared, escorting an elderly woman with a bandaged head.

"Barrows' mother," Littlefield said in a low voice, as he whipped out his notebook. One of Radbourne's tips was obviously incorrect. Slowly at first, but later with hysteric vigor, the old woman told her story of the night's horror. The sudden invasion of her peaceful home; her boy's desperate struggle with the invaders, and her painful journey for help after the murderers left her for dead with a wound on her head, were vividly related. Radbourne forgot his professional duties and ceased to take notes, a fact Littlefield noted with a covert smile. The woman could give no clue to the identity of the murderers; their appearance was not clear in her mind. Satisfied that she could reveal no more, the coroner led the party to the Barrows homestead.

It was a dark and dingy old house, far removed from other dwellings and well back from the road. There was

no light until one of the party found a lantern in the barn. They entered the room where the dead man lay, and flickering light revealed the ghastly picture. Furniture broken in a desperate struggle was tumbled about, and the walls were splashed with blood. In a corner lay Barrows, battered almost beyond recognition by a big club beside him. A little white tidy, almost the only unmarred furnishing of the room, hung close to his face with its gilt motto, "God Bless Our Home."

The general facts Radbourne quickly obtained, with the coroner's statement that no arrest had been made, or clue to the murderers discovered. Littlefield seemed in no hurry to depart, and Radbourne came to cherish a hope that he might distance him in a race for their respective papers. He watched for a chance quietly to slip from the house; then ran at top speed to Burbank's. His boy was waiting and lost no time in starting homeward. With much persuasion their horse covered the road to the car-barn at a speedy gait.

Impatiently Radbourne called for the *Globe* telephone number and looked at his watch. It was 2:40. Blair responded and personally took the story. With surprise Radbourne found he had a fair idea of its details without resort to notes. For a half hour he talked steadily, until Blair interrupted with the announcement that the "yarn" would do. About to ring off Radbourne found the line taken away from him and recognized Littlefield's brusque voice. He listened, instinctively at first, then deliberately.

"Of course you've got my story," Littlefield said sharply. "What do you mean? I sent it to you by Dr. Geyser when he left an hour ago. The *Globe* has a young greenhorn out here, and he's been waiting for me

to make the first break to cover. We ought to have his paper frozen."

"It looks as though we'd be the frozen party," a second voice said irritably. "The doctor hasn't shown up and we haven't a line. It is late, but you can give me a skeleton from your notes."

"Haven't got any notes," Littlefield growled with a muttered curse. "I left them with Ford of the New York *Graphic*. He came late, and I thought we were all right. . . ."

"Pretty mess," his interlocutor snapped. "Just do your best from memory."

Littlefield did his best. Radbourne listened with glee as he realized that somehow his rival was failing to do his usual good work. His face was wreathed with smiles as he set out for his car. And he beamed upon the "Baron," when that youth, a very passive spectator of proceedings, ventured the opinion that "we had a good story."

The presses were grinding when they reached the office. Blair threw Radbourne a copy of the paper with the brief comment: "We've got them skinned. *Times* isn't out yet."

Radbourne saw his first big story gracing the front page with an imposing head. Even plausible likenesses of the murdered man and his aged mother lent tone. In his general satisfaction he forgot to inquire their source. When the *Times* appeared a half hour later its story was decidedly inferior to the *Globe's*. With this conviction Radbourne went to his room and slept till noon.

### CHAPTER III

Next morning Radbourne met Lewis on the office stairs and received a beaming welcome. It notified him that the past was forgiven. He threw himself into the work with renewed zest, especially after Norman advised him he was to look for various pointers on the murder case and turn in anything that came to his ears.

The morning papers announced that a negro giving the name of McLain had been arrested in the outskirts of the city. On his person had been found a watch with Barrows's initials engraved on the case and a pocketbook bearing his name. It was rumored that the negro had given a confession after the police third degree. But the officers refused all information, and denied reporters access to the prisoner.

"I don't suppose it's any use to send a man down," Norman had said in Radbourne's hearing; "anyway, the chief is sore on us for opposing his reappointment, and wouldn't give us much consideration. You ask permission to see McLain, Radbourne. It will be a feather in your cap if you get it."

During the morning Radbourne found his mind frequently wandering to the inaccessible prisoner. Was there no way to reach him? He thought of the reputed exploits of metropolitan reporters and impatiently dismissed them as "rot." But a plan gradually crystallized; as a result he came away from a bakeshop with a mince pie snugly stowed in a box. Then he lost no time in reaching the city prison.



"What do you want?" the turnkey asked.

"I'd like to see the prison," Radbourne explained.  
"Isn't it visitors' day?"

"We don't have any," the officer replied curtly.

"Oh, I didn't know," said Radbourne. "I'm from Waterwick." He did not feel that this stretched the truth.

"Perhaps it wouldn't do any hurt," the turnkey mused.  
"You can come in; but don't stay long. Keep away from the murderer," with a jocose shrug.

"You haven't got a murderer, have you?" Radbourne inquired with a look of anxiety.

"Yes," carelessly nodding at a cell numbered 53, "in there. I'll be back in a few minutes. Don't be afraid." With a clang of the iron door Radbourne was locked in.

Without a second's delay he hurried to the indicated cell, and looked in at a dark heap curled on a cot. It slowly unrolled, and a stupid looking darkey lounged to the door.

"Any baccy?" he asked nonchalantly.

"Yes, have a cigar," Radbourne affably replied.  
"Feed you well?"

"No," snarled the prisoner. "Nothin' decent."

"Like pie?" Radbourne inquired.

"If I only had mince!" The darkey rolled his eyes in a spasm of toothsome memory.

"Maybe I can help you," Radbourne said thoughtfully, as he drew his pie from its box and thrust it between the bars. For a minute or two there was a sound of swinish eating. Then the negro paused to lick his fingers and survey his mysterious benefactor with some astonishment. He was evidently puzzled by sudden comfort.

"Where do you live, Bill?" Radbourne asked. Bill seemed a good name.

"Raised in Alabama," said the negro with an incipient whine.

"So was I, some," Radbourne asserted unblushingly. "Lived there near Mobile for a good bit. But how do you happen here, Bill?"

Bill glanced fearfully about, and began to cry in characteristic fashion of the southern field hand.

"I don't just know, boss," he whined. "I didn't do nuthin'. It was a man I went with, and I don't know him. He runned away afterwards and made me keep the things they found. I don't know him, sure."

"Too bad. Tell me about it. Perhaps I can get a lawyer I know to help you out."

"They telled me not to say a word," whimpered Bill, with a fearsome glance at the bull's-eye leading to the office. "But I'll just give it to you, if you won't let 'em know."

"Of course not," Radbourne replied soothingly.

For five minutes he strained his power of concentration while the negro poured forth a rambling tale, describing a murder in which he had no active part; the appearance of the unknown white man, and the way in which they divided the plunder and separated. He had barely finished when a rasping key heralded the turnkey's return. He found Radbourne examining Bill from a safe distance.

"Sort of a missing link," he remarked carelessly and passed out.

Once on the street, he dashed for the *Globe* office, hastily grouping his points as he ran. Through the office

he hurried, ignoring remarks addressed to him by waiting members of the staff.

"James must have a scoop," observed Watson from behind a cloud of smoke.

For a half-hour Radbourne furiously pounded his typewriter, and felt that his pace was snail-like. Hastily revising a line here and there, he gathered up his sheets and dropped them on Norman's desk without comment.

"What is it, Radbourne?" asked Watson, as he selected a chair and leisurely began to fill his pipe.

"Nothing much," he answered carelessly.

"Oh, go on," the little man said testily. "You've been here long enough to know a beat from a pipe-dream, and you wouldn't work up a hot box in comparing to-day's thermometer with that of the corresponding day last year. What is it?"

"Yes, what is it, Radbourne?" asked Norman, who had quietly approached. "Is it all solid? No chance for a throwdown?"

"As straight as a string," Radbourne declared with some asperity. "Don't you want it?"

"Of course," — hastily. "It's the story of the day. The 'Kid'," with a benign glance at Radbourne, "has a confession from McLain. Come here, Radbourne."

Sundry whistles and congratulations followed them as they walked towards Norman's desk. In the newspaper world merit never waits for tardy recognition.

"I've sent out for Gould, our artist, to make a picture for the story," Norman explained. "We ought to 'mug' McLain for it."

"But we haven't a photograph to reproduce from."

"That won't bother," Norman returned calmly. "Ah,

here's Gould. We want a sketch of McLain, the Barrows murderer, on short notice, Mr. Gould. Radbourne will give you his general description. Make it double column."

"All right," the artist replied as he whipped out his notebook. "Commonplace African features, Mr. Radbourne? Yes. Round face? No. Well, then we'll call it medium. Any marks? Big scar on forehead over right eye. That will do, I guess."

While Radbourne still stared in amazement, Gould stepped to his drawing board and began making a rapid series of scratches.

A half hour later newsboys were crying an edition with a first page proudly displaying great headlines on McLain's confession. In the center of the page was a blurry likeness of a savage appearing negro. Radbourne had never seen the original or certain picturesque passages in his story, which Norman referred to as "purple twilight."

As Radbourne left the office he encountered Littlefield. The *Times* man looked dyspeptic. "Who the devil got your bluff about McLain's confession?" he demanded roughly.

"The what?" Radbourne asked.

"You know what I mean," less belligerently. "The negro's confession?"

"The 'greenhorn' who went out to Enfield the night of the murder."

"The devil!" Littlefield blurted. "You're a lucky youngster. But the *Globe* won't appreciate you," he called as he hurried on.

## CHAPTER IV

Spring advanced until the May Festival was at hand. This was Fordport's musical climax of the year: three days of concerts by imported soloists, a New York orchestra, and a large chorus gathered from the surrounding countryside.

The greatness of the chorus was in numbers only; but the members had friends; and the director was a good business man. He was also deeply infatuated with his entirely original manner of misinterpreting standard works. But Fordport people admired his style, since they did not understand it. The Fordport press praised it copiously, with the aid of programme notes; and the orchestra got its pay. So there was no discordant note in a hymn of praise annually pasted in the director's scrap-book.

With these facts, and others which might have been beneficial, Radbourne was unacquainted. He attended the opening concert with the clear conscience of an upright critic, seeing only his duty. He even resisted an inclination to bestow his second ticket on a friend, lest his companion disturb him during the performance. Carrying a notebook, he diligently wrote comment on the various numbers, a thing he never did after he learned that a critic's conclusions emerge Minerva-like.

Without an extensive knowledge of music, Radbourne had heard a sufficient number of excellent artists to distinguish between good and bad. He understood the

liberties which an erratic conductor took with the score and glaring faults of the chorus, booming along like a great river of sound while the director perspired, and drove his singers as a jockey lifts his horse in a whirlwind finish. And all about him women, young and old, babbled frothy platitudes of ignorant praise.

So buoyant was the general temper of the audience that Radbourne began to doubt his judgment, and wonder if he correctly estimated the caliber of the work. In the end he compromised with conscience by dwelling on the social brilliancy of the occasion, the perfunctory testimonials of regard exchanged by audience and performers, and trivial details. He allowed the audience's estimate of the performance to go as his own with one exception — his observation that "in Beethoven's Fifth Symphony Director Bethel took unusual liberties with the score, and did not improve the composer's conception."

It was near noon of the second day when the "Baron" informed Radbourne that Lewis desired to see him. The editor was sitting at his desk, cutting paper.

"Afraid you're in a mess on the concert, Radbourne," he said. "Didn't you know Bethel was the Colonel's son-in-law?"

"No," Radbourne replied, "but what has that to do with the concert?"

"Why, you roasted the concert. Blair should have saved you. The Colonel wants to see you in his den. You'd better go in at once. He'll only scold a little, but I'm to cover the rest of the festival."

With a sinking heart and placid exterior Radbourne sought the den, a place avoided by members of the staff

with unpleasant memories of star chamber sessions. The Colonel was a little man with a large inherited fortune and a small accumulation of newspaper lore. The *Globe* was his hobby, and he paid for his privilege of dazing his staff with schemes, and cudgelling his political opponents.

His interview with Radbourne was brief. "I find that in your report of last night's concert you break one of the reporter's rules," he said. "Reporters should not express opinions. If the audience was satisfied with the programme, you had only to register its verdict. Besides, none of the other papers criticised Mr. Bethel; so you are probably wrong. Be careful to guard against such things in the future." He turned to examine some papers on his desk, and Radbourne felt himself dismissed.

For several days he smarted with a feeling of unappreciated effort the true newspaper man never outgrows, be he ever so skilful and the matter of most trivial description. He had an impression that he was in disfavor at headquarters, and a few months' experience on the staff showed that the *Globe* easily dispensed with its employees. Watson had been the last to go, after erroneously stating that a Senator was present at a political dinner. He relied on the word of a waiter without personal investigation. The Senator was very angry, because the dinner had been arranged by men he did not affiliate with, and concerned a plan he did not endorse. So he wrote the Colonel a curt note, and the axe fell.

"Farewell my greatness," Watson had calmly remarked, when he opened the fateful blue envelope; "and good-by, co-laborers and slaves. The Colonel and I are to separate."

"Too bad," some one remarked. "Is it on account of the dinner?"

"Precisely," he cheerfully admitted. "Take warning by me and don't trust the colored race."

"What will you do?" Radbourne asked.

"Go with the *Times*, probably," Watson said from the depths of his desk, where he was sorting the accumulation of a year. "They like innocent men. Even Littlefield was taken home."

With the air of one starting on a vacation he shook hands with the staff and departed to say farewell to Lewis.

"Watty doesn't mind," a lanky youth observed. "He's worked on every paper in town since I came here two years ago."

For a time afterwards Radbourne was scrupulously exact about each and every minor detail in news items, and quaked in his boots when an occasional fancy that he had erred in a number or misspelled a name flashed into mind. But nothing disastrous occurred, and he gradually regained his poise. Of his good standing he was soon to have a sign.

One afternoon in June he was called to Lewis's den by an office boy who usually managed to give the summoned an impression he was about to undergo a trying ordeal.

Lewis seemed harmless enough as he cut the inevitable paper and slowly puffed a stout cigar.

"Sit down," he said. "Did you say you knew something about state politics?"

"A little," Radbourne modestly admitted.

"I want you to go to Buffington and cover the state convention to-morrow. I usually go, but this time



sciatica and private business keep me at home. You are green for such an assignment. I don't mind saying, though, that your work has been most satisfactory. The nomination for governor this year is a cut-and-dried thing for Bradbury, since Burbank pulled out last week. Tucker hasn't a ghost of a show. You have an hour to get the 5:10. I've fixed your accommodations by wiring for a room at the United States Hotel. Write a letter to-night with as much of the organization as you can get, and telephone the rest in the morning. The convention opens at ten-thirty and should adjourn by noon. I want to release the story with cuts of the nominees in the second edition. We have the faces of all probabilities. I rely on you to get it all out and dust Littlefield. He will be there for the *Times*."

With a sudden restoration of self-respect Radbourne hailed a cab and drove to his room for a few travelling essentials. Later he wished he had left them behind. He had never attended a full-blooded state convention.

At the station he saw the vanguard of delegates and slate-fixers. Nearly all were from Fordport and rather sleek, as becomes city politicians. Cheek by jowl sat the moneyed man to whom politics was a pastime and the ward worker whose pockets were likely filled with proceeds of the recent primary campaign.

Soon the delegates from country towns began to arrive. They were hard-headed old farmers, clerks, small merchants, mechanics, various classes. Many attempted a jaunty air as they puffed campaign cigars and cast affectionate glances at the Bradbury button on their coats.

It seemed to be a unanimous Bradbury crowd as the special pulled out from the train shed, with a brass band

braying on the platform and a crescendo of boisterous "Rahs!"

Once en route the ardor of the delegates increased rapidly. "Hail, Hail, the Gang's All Here" and "Nearer My God to Thee" mixed unmelodiously with old "Go Way Back and Sit Down." A short man with a red nose and yellow waistcoat led the chorus, using his cane for a baton and a car-seat for a director's stand. Occasionally his enthusiasm led him to tap the head of a delegate in front until that individual rose suddenly and stood the director on his head, to the detriment of a glossy silk hat. No one was angered and a minute later the crowd was drinking the director's health from sundry flat bottles produced from grips. With a grip containing only toilet essentials Radbourne felt himself decidedly unfashionable.

The bottle continued to go the rounds, and at each station the yells for Bradbury grew louder. Dignified officials, who seemed the essence of austerity at their desks, grew kittenish and played puss-in-the-corner up and down the aisle. When a man lost his balance he was promptly sat upon by as many as could find room on his prostrate form and subjected to a course of physical culture more elaborate than any provided by Swoboda. A little attorney, whose dapper figure Radbourne frequently saw about City Hall, was ended up and spun violently like a top, until his face took on the hue of an overripe plum.

After a time Radbourne tired of the babel of sound and sought quiet in the rear car. In a corner sat Bradbury and Burbank, seeming very friendly. Burbank apparently harbored no malice towards the man against

whom he had waged a bitter personal campaign. It wasn't natural, Radburne thought; then he remembered that his first political maxim from Congressman Talcott had been, "Forget and forgive." Here was a good illustration.

As the train neared Buffington the clamorous delegates became comparatively subdued. Buffington was larger than Fordport and its people more accustomed to noise. For the time being the city seemed owned by the delegates. They saluted old acquaintances at every corner. The Fordport delegation and their followers split into small knots bound for the "United States."

At this hotel the state committee had established headquarters. It was a hive of political industry, even at twilight. When Radbourne fought his way to the desk and registered, the clerk remarked without waiting for a room application,

"Can't give you sleeping quarters. We're full to the eaves, and cots are going into the hall and parlors."

"Possibly this will fix it," Radbourne said, as he dropped a note from Lewis on the desk.

"Oh, yes," assented the clerk with a hasty glance. "You take Mr. Lewis's room. We expected him. Front, No. 68!"

Radbourne presently found himself following a heavy-footed bell-boy to a comfortable room on the second floor. He heard the president of the Fordport board of aldermen cursing his exile to the hall, and felt a thrill of satisfaction. The press was a power, after all. Hastily disposing his scanty luggage, he turned the key in his door and sought the street floor. The *Globe* wanted a picturesque story of the night before the convention, and

he was bent on obtaining a complete impression of proceedings.

He had scarcely reached the office when a general movement towards the dining-room set in. The head waiter and his assistant manfully coped with the mob, occasionally closing the doors when pressure threatened a general stampede. Just ahead of Radbourne in the rush was the slight figure of the state leader, known as the "Easy Boss." Radbourne followed it to a corner where a table had been reserved. Fortunately securing a seat nearby, he turned his attention to the menu, satisfied that he was near the storm center for the time being.

For a few minutes the Boss sat in conspicuous isolation. Then Radbourne started with surprise, as Tucker and Bradbury approached together and took seats at the star table. His surprise seemed shared by others who noted the late arrivals. A conspicuous Bradbury rooter on his left whistled softly and nudged his neighbor with a profane comment:

"Well, I'll be damned."

"The lion and the lamb, and the all powerful jackal," was the reply. "Looks as though the 'Old Man' had done some pacifying with a club. Tucker will have to come into line, if he wants any consideration next time. Looks funny, though, when they've been flying at each other's throats like a pair of dogs."

The distinguished three seemed on amicable terms in a chat which betrayed no signs of excitement. Presently they rose together and left the dining-room, soon followed by a majority of its occupants. The real battle of the convention was about to begin. Bradbury opened headquarters in the ladies' parlor, while Tucker took posses-

sion of the smoking-room. From these centers emissaries frequently emerged to seek their quarry in the lobby, packed almost to the point of suffocation with a mass of talking, laughing, smoking men. Little groups collected here and there and dispersed after shaking hands and heads, with conversation ranging from self-satisfied comparison to violent recrimination.

Veterans of more hard-fought contests than mettlesome youngsters could remember threaded the crowd from fringe to fringe, and called each man by his Christian name. Anecdotes, usually with a personal barb, were bandied back and forth so that the lobby seemed a fountain of speech.

"The state committee are down to hard pan in 42," some one said to Radbourne, and he turned in time to see a man who represented a New York paper elbowing his way through the crowd. He quickly followed, presently reaching a large parlor to which he was admitted on presentation of his card.

About a table in the center sat the Boss, the chairman of the state committee, and half a dozen other men Radbourne later identified as the state executive committee. Spread on the table were a number of typewritten sheets on which the chairman made occasional erasure or alteration, after general debate invariably settled by a crisp sentence from the Boss.

"No," Radbourne heard him say sharply, after a protracted argument, "he can't go on the platform committee. He has criticised the administration publicly, and would be equal to a minority report. It won't do."

"Very well," the chairman said, and a name was scratched from his list. The process of elimination was

long drawn, and the reporters possessed their souls in patience, as old timers told stories of past conventions in which dire surprises were sprung.

"This will be a dead one," a dyspeptic-looking veteran declared. "We'll have even the benediction set up before the gavel drops. I'm half inclined to kill time with a quiet little game. I think I'll sleep to-morrow morning, if one of you fellows will send my sheets out at proper intervals to convince the office I am toiling. The Boss has a machine so slick that it kills the mission of the press. We'll have to scalp him in self-defence, if he doesn't furnish more red meat."

Other remarks from the disappointed one were cut off by the secretary of the committee, who laid a closely written sheet of foolscap before them.

"First sheet, boys," he said, "and remember you are pledged not to release it before eleven in the morning. The convention opens at that hour."

"Some one make me a carbon copy and I'll read," said a man before whom the sheet lay, and the group began to write hastily at his dictation. It was announced that the convention would be called to order by the chairman of the committee at eleven o'clock, when prayer would be offered by a given clergyman. Then came the roll call, the announcement of temporary organization and report from delegations. Radbourne noted that the course to be pursued by many men, none of them present, was perfectly understood. His own name was on the list of secretaries and a long list of names indicated those who would report the strength of their county delegations, after which on motion of a selected individual the convention would accept their collective report. His own

selection as a secretary troubled him, for he felt that he should give the *Globe* his undivided attention.

"I think I ought to decline," he said to the man on his right. "I can't write two reports at once."

"Nothing to do," his neighbor explained with a pitying glance; "not even so much as officers of the convention who have their every act indicated in advance. A clerk to the committee keeps tab and the secretaries are merely touched for an autograph on his report. It's complimentary to you, because the *Globe* has plugged for Bradbury."

"Oh," Radbourne said. Another mystery was solved. Afterwards he kept his counsel and listened diligently.

Presently came sheets which indicated men assigned to make and second motions for the appointment of committees, and the personnel of committees to be announced by the chair after the temporary organization had been made permanent. With the names of the committee on resolutions came a draft of the platform, endorsed by the Boss, whose conscience was in close communion with the White House. A list of men who would nominate candidates for various offices was offered. The only thing lacking in a skeleton report of the convention to be was the party's elective ticket. And a humorous reporter passed about a slip with his "O.K." of its probable complexion.

"That's all to-night," the secretary said, when the last sheet had been verified. The reporters at once scattered to write preliminary reports which would be in type, waiting confirmation for release, before the gavel fell on the convention.

Turning a corner of the corridor near his room Radbourne jostled a man who put out his hand.

"Hullo, Jim," he said genially, "what are you doing here? Haven't risen to the dignity of political star on the *Globe* so soon, have you?"

"I didn't expect to come," Radbourne said, looking into the kindly face of Congressman Talcott. "But I was sent down in a hurry. Sciatica nipped Lewis."

"Just my case," Talcott laughed. "Only I came from Washington. How are you getting on?"

"After a fashion. But it's strange business for me, and the other reporters are old stagers. Lewis ordered me not to be euchered by the *Times*, though, so I suppose my head will be forfeit if I fall down."

"Yes," Talcott mused, "you must hold your end up." He meditated for a moment or two, then asked abruptly: "Can you keep a secret, Jim? Of course you can. I've known you from a little shaver up. Because I like you I'm going to give you a pointer no other newspaper man will have before a surprising event is sprung on the convention to-morrow. At present it is known to but four men; and I'm the only one that will leak. I don't mind if you put your paper in touch with the matter, so you can gain a lap when it is released. But for my sake you must promise not to use it earlier. Do you agree?"

"Certainly!" Radbourne exclaimed with eagerness he tried to conceal. "And I can promise that Lewis will follow suit."

"All right. Then here is the point. Bradbury isn't to be nominated for governor to-morrow."

"But he's got a cinch," cried Radbourne. "Every-



body concedes that he has Tucker licked to a standstill."

"He had a cinch," Talcott corrected. "I can't explain it to you fully, for even after to-morrow the entire story won't come out, at least through me. But you see Bradbury's son-in-law is a candidate for a foreign mission, and Tucker is the man the administration wants for governor this trip. Of course the Boss could have pushed Tucker ahead, as he has boosted Bradbury and squelched Burbank. But he has a double game. By backing Bradbury he gets from the White House a promise that certain candidates for Federal office will be nominated, if he sidetracks him. Now he chokes him off peaceably by promised support for his son-in-law, and assurance that he stands next in line for the state capitol. Tucker will be grateful for being allowed to win, so the Boss has guarantee of a dutiful governor."

"A very foxy Boss," observed Radbourne.

"Now this arrangement," the Congressman continued, "was agreed to by interested parties less than half an hour ago. It will stand. When the convention meets to-morrow, Bradbury will take himself out of the way at the proper time. It will make a rumpus, but the deal is sure to go through. Understand?"

"I think so," Radbourne said.

"All right. Use it discreetly, and don't make me sorry I helped you. Good night." Before Radbourne could thank him he had gone.

For a few minutes Radbourne hesitated, then hurried to a telephone booth and closed the door carefully behind him. "Give me Fordport, 11-2," he called. Presently sleepy tones he recognized as Lewis's muttered:

"Yes. Stop ringing, won't you? Who is it? Oh, you, Radbourne. What's the matter?"

"Important disclosure," said Radbourne. Then he hurriedly told Talcott's story.

"Seems almost impossible, but Talcott wouldn't lie to you," Lewis said, after a whistle expressing astonishment. "I haven't heard a whisper of such a deal before, and I'll wager we are first with it. I'll tell you what to do, Radbourne. I'll have the story set up early in the morning and if Bradbury withdraws in the convention, wire "Yes" as quickly as you can. I can have it on the street ten minutes later. Get the idea?"

"Yes," answered Radbourne.

"How about your preliminary report? Do you give us the organization and other details by mail to-night?"

"I'll have them in the mail within an hour."

"Good," said the editor, and sleepiness entered his voice as care relaxed. "Good night."

Radbourne hung up the receiver with pleasant consciousness he had a scoop which would set the public by the ears. There was no inkling of it in the thinning crowd as he hurried to his room.

It was nearly midnight when he sat down to write after locking his door. A wise precaution, he concluded, when soon roistering voices approached the door and some one knocked loudly.

"Yes," he called.

"Got any pajamas?"

"Sure," Radbourne replied acidly; "want to borrow them?"

"No, but we want to borrow you." A kick against the door emphasized the remark. "Put them on and

come right along. Every dude with pajamas has to join the cake walk on the veranda. We've got to have you, so hurry up."

"Sorry to decline," Radbourne remarked, "but I'm too busy to parade now."

"Oh, get busy and don't gas," the voice resumed impatiently. "Do you want us to break the door down?"

"If you like. It isn't my door."

There was a brief silence and then a new voice said softly:

"It's one of the reporters in there. Probably busy. We'd better give him a wide berth. He might roast us, and we don't want to do any squaring at home."

"All right," the pugnacious one said crossly. "But he needn't be so stiff. If they were all like him, what'd we do for fun? Might as well not go to conventions. Come on, boys."

"Oh, my name is Solomon Levi,

At my store on Salem street —"

Radbourne heard them go marching down the corridor, heavily marking time and stopping now and then to investigate the wardrobe of timorous sleepers. Then he buckled down to work and wrote steadily until he had completed a sketchy story on features about the hotel and city, prominent men at the convention and general night-before gossip. To this he added the platform agreed upon by the party leaders and sealed a bulky package marked "Globe — Rush" with a sigh of relief. The clock was striking two as he tumbled into bed.

## CHAPTER V

When Radbourne awoke the sun shone in brightly, and his watch said eight o'clock. With a feeling of remissness in sleeping so late he dressed hastily and hurried down to the dining-room. Few were there, but it was not, he soon learned, a case of early breakfasting by the convention crowd. With varying expressions wrought by a night of excitement the political throng came drifting in. No one seemed to hurry. All apparently thought their battle lost or won. Scarce a delegate remained uncommitted on governor, and both Bradbury and Tucker looked confident. To Radbourne Tucker appeared jubilant, though he bore himself quietly.

Presently knots of men began to stroll towards the City Hall, where the convention was to be held. Radbourne turned his steps thither. He was not sure about accommodations for the press, and did not mean to lose a point of vantage through loitering.

"The press?" a bluecoat said, in reply to his question. "The reporters have that table on the right side of the platform, next the chairman's desk."

None of his associates were there, and Radbourne selected a seat affording advantages to hear and see. He noted that though few delegates were seated in their sections, indicated by huge placards which placed Omega county in one row and Oneida in another, the galleries were well filled. In the rear a brass band swung into the "Washington Post" march. An immediate increase in the inpouring tide rewarded its efforts.

In anterooms and corners county chairmen were holding meetings of their delegations for adjustment of minor issues, or collecting alternates to fill vacancies. After a time comparative silence succeeded the general bustle. And presently through a side door the state chairman came on the stage, accompanied by a congressman or two. The band played "Hail to the Chief," as the party seated themselves. Then stentorian cheers for the President jarred the windows.

Formalities observed, the chairman buttoned his frock coat, took a firm grip on the schedule of events, and seeing that the "Easy Boss" was seated with his county delegation, rapped for order. A few minor evolutions before in a far corner a little man climbed on a settee. His lips were seen to move and the chairman, consulting his notes, announced that Mr. Jones of Cayuga moved that chairmen of county delegations be authorized and instructed to report their membership. Two other men jumped up and were identified by the schedule as delegates who seconded Mr. Jones's motion. No one seemed to care much about it, as the chairman declared it carried.

During a proper period, after which county chairmen took from their pockets previously prepared reports, the convention listened to the band. Thus far the reporters had little to do save fill in with names from a committee list the blanks left in a previously written report. Messenger boys hovering about darted off whenever a sheet was ready for the wire. Radbourne found that he followed events quite readily, and wondered that he had worried over the assignment.

The convention's makeup was settled, and all things progressed as the secretary had promised until the nomi-

nation for governor was reached. Here the permanent chairman dropped the perfunctory manner in which he transacted previous business.

At the call for nominations a tall, lank man stood up in the rear of the hall and was recognized as Mr. Black of Ponemah. Striding down the hall, he faced the convention and launched into a glowing eulogy of Tucker. He wept over his services to the Republic on the battlefield, grew sentimental in reference to party loyalty, and waxed enthusiastic regarding splendid abilities so sorely needed by the state. Then he burst into a tirade against bossism, and proclaimed his candidate as the people's champion whom the machine would throttle.

"He doesn't know of the deal," Radbourne said to himself and looked down to where the Boss wore a smile of peace and joy. With a snort of defiance the leonine orator sought his seat while the delegates cheered; for they were there to make a noise. And the reporters wrote a paragraph saying that Mr. Black of Ponemah nominated Tucker in a fiery speech, savagely flaying bossism.

Next Judge Porter of Troy, a portly gentleman of honeyed manner, took the floor, and the reporters bent their backs for a season of swift work. The nominating speech for a successful candidate requires display.

"I stand here the representative of Mr. Bradbury," he began. An enthusiast shut him off with, "Hurrah! He'll win easy!"

"I stand here in behalf of Mr. Bradbury," the judge resumed, "to announce that for the good of the party he deems it best to withdraw his name as a candidate for the gubernatorial nomination."

A hush of dazed surprise as the judge paused to mop his forehead. The reporters sat up in honest amazement. Radbourne quickly wrote "Yes" on a telegraph blank and sent a messenger scurrying to the nearest operator.

"Private interests and ill health," the speaker continued, "dictate his retirement from the field, only entered at the earnest request of friends. These facts, and a desire for absolute harmony in the ranks of the party, lead to this step. In his behalf I thank all who honored him with their support, and second heartily the nomination of Mr. Tucker."

As the judge resumed his seat with a look of relief, the chairman swiftly said:

"If there are no more candidates, we will proceed to ballot. What is your pleasure, gentlemen?"

From the front row of the first county delegation rose a man whose florid face was purple with rage.

"It's a rotten deal," he shouted without trying to secure the recognition of the chair. "We've been tricked and sold. By Heaven, we'll show the machine what we think of it at the polls!"

"Mr. Clark of Cayuga has the floor," remarked the chairman without glancing at the infuriated speaker who drowned the voice of Mr. Clark, vainly struggling to be heard.

"It is moved by Mr. Clark and seconded by Mr. Colby," glancing from his list to a second would-be orator, "that Mr. Tucker be nominated by acclamation. If that is your pleasure, manifest it."

A round of "Ayes" from the jubilant Tuckerites, not yet understanding the nature of their victory, was fol-

lowed by a few faint "Noes" from dazed followers of Bradbury.

"It is a vote," said the chairman. "We will now proceed to the nomination of four delegates at large to the national convention."

With scarcely a ripple the regulation order of the day was resumed. But the reporters wrote fiercely on their sensation, and the dyspeptic had no carping word. Radbourne easily followed the trend of events to early adjournment, Tucker having appeared to thank the convention for the "unexpected honor."

"Two hours and twenty minutes," the chairman said as he looked at his watch after adjournment. "That isn't bad. Russell took three hours last time, and he didn't have as much business as I handled."

Arm-in-arm Bradbury and Tucker left the hall, while the Boss sought a side door. He was smoking a long cigar, and affectionately regarding a pink in his button-hole.

"Are you all solid on the big story?" a veteran correspondent kindly asked as Radbourne gathered his last copy.

"I think we have it in type by this time," said Radbourne, with a glance at his watch.

"I see," with a look of surprise. "You had a tip. I wasn't so lucky. Congratulate you."

On the homeward trip Radbourne tortured himself with fears lest his wire had failed to reach Lewis until he met an outward bound train from Fordport with its early evening editions. He bought a 12:30 *Globe* and saw "Bradbury Withdraws" running across the top of the first page. His wire had just caught the edition.



Lewis met him with a beaming face. " We skinned the town, my boy, and beat the *Times* by thirty minutes. You just got the 12 :30. Everybody is talking about it, and we are credited with first blood. Smoke? "

In token of pleasure he produced a villainous looking cigar which Radbourne accepted with secret misgivings.

## CHAPTER VI

A few days after the convention Radbourne met Littlefield at City Hall. The older man crossed the corridor and greeted him with affability in striking contrast to the surly indifference of his usual manner.

"Good story you had on Bradbury," he observed. "It made quite a hit about town. Our editor was stuck on it. How would you like a place on the *Times* with special assignments and a good salary?"

"Thanks," Radbourne answered, "but I'm not sick of the *Globe*. Lewis has used me well, and I don't want to leave him."

"All right," Littlefield said carelessly, though a slightly acid tinge was in his voice. "You'll have to wait a while before you take his measure. Called at police headquarters to-day?"

"An hour ago," said Radbourne, "but there was nothing on the bulletin board, and the deputy said he had no news to give out."

"I got a small item a few minutes ago," Littlefield volunteered, as he fumbled the leaves of his notebook. "Happened to be there when a report on it came in and nailed the deputy for a few lines. It may be a sizable story later. Just now here's all there is in it. Get out your pencil, and I'll save you the trouble of another trip to headquarters."

"All right? Well, James F. Kernan was arrested this morning at ten on Canal street, charged with raising a

check from fifty to five hundred dollars. He flim-flammed the Canal Bank and the police have, I am told, conclusive identification of his handwriting on the endorsement, also forged, by the way. He's a clothing dealer on Milk Street. Bail, one thousand dollars, and sureties furnished by his son-in-law an hour after his arrest. That's all there is now. Got it?"

"Yes," Radbourne murmured as he scribbled hastily. "Heaps obliged. It saves me trouble."

"Oh, don't mention it. We all help one another on routine matters. Good-by."

The story seemed fairly complete for a criminal proceeding in a preliminary stage. Radbourne made no effort to probe it further at the time. In the afternoon he asked the deputy if anything new had developed in the Kernan case, and the official replied in the negative. So the story ran in evening editions without change, on the lines suggested by Littlefield.

It was nearly five in the afternoon when Radbourne, preparing to leave the office with other members of the day reportorial staff, heard Norman call from his desk,

"Radbourne, come here a minute."

"Where did you get that Kernan story?" he asked when Radbourne reached his desk.

"From Littlefield," Radbourne explained, rather puzzled by Norman's manner. "He had it from the police this morning, and saved me the trouble of going after details. This afternoon the deputy said there was nothing new on it. What's the matter? Did we get scooped on anything?"

"No," Norman said grimly, "we have too much. Read the *Times* story."

Radbourne examined it carefully. "The only difference seems to be that they have the man's name James A. Kernan and we have it James F. That's funny, for I asked Littlefield twice about the name and he said it was James F."

"It isn't funny," Norman burst forth with a smothered oath. "It's a dirty trick, such as only a cur like Littlefield would play. He traded on your lack of acquaintance in the city to put you and the paper in a hole. James A. Kernan is a well known gambler, and James F. a prominent politician and business man, an ex-mayor and shining light. He's rich as mud and a bitter political enemy to the Colonel. Of course James A. is the man arrested, and Littlefield knew it.

"The result of your blunder is James F's threat to sue us for libel, if we don't make a humble apology in the next edition. He called me by 'phone a few minutes ago, and made the wire hot. I didn't promise then, but told him to call at eight this evening and talk the matter over. But it looks as though he must be satisfied, for the Colonel dreads a libel suit more than he hates Kernan. I wouldn't be surprised if we both walked the plank, for if I hadn't been careless I would have noted and corrected your error. Any one knows Kernan wouldn't steal, though he's a bad egg in some respects."

For a minute they sat in silence, while Radbourne quivered with a sickening feeling that he was a careless idiot who had ruined another's career with his own. It seemed to him, just then, his reputation would be so irretrievably spoiled that he could not continue in the profession.

Suddenly Norman slapped his knee, and turned quickly in his chair.

"There may be a way to save our bacon, the paper's pride, and balk Littlefield's malice!" he exclaimed. "It depends on our finding a man who may be in the city, and may be anywhere. He's a rolling stone. Drive like the devil to the county jail and tell Bruce, the sheriff, that you come from me and want to talk to Danny Kane, if he's there. If you find Kane, tell him I'm in a box and want to use him as a bluff on the Center Street job he was in two years ago. Impress on him the fact that it's only a bluff which won't get him into trouble. Hustle, now, and remember that if you get Kane right we are O. K."

Without parley Radbourne headed for the staircase. He was bumping over the pavements in a rickety taxi before he discovered that he was hatless. In his frame of mind that was not an important matter. He left the driver in the jail yard and ran to the sheriff's office.

"Yes, Kane's here," the sheriff said, when Radbourne explained his identity and his mission. "He's usually here for vagrancy, when he isn't doing time somewhere else. I'll take you to him in the shop, if you're in a hurry."

"I think I am," said Radbourne, and they passed through a double-barred gate to an iron door and came suddenly into a long, low-studded room, which echoed with the mallets of convicts engaged in the manufacture of heels. Each swung his mallet slowly, and none swung hard.

Radbourne waited in a corner until Bruce returned with

a little man, whom he left with the laconic suggestion, "Kane," and returned to his office. Kane, as Radbourne sized him up, seemed a man easily influenced, but not vicious. Now he regarded Radbourne with the watchfulness of one guarding against surprise.

Under the circumstances diplomacy seemed too tedious. So Radbourne plunged at once to the crux of the matter.

"I'm Radbourne of the *Globe*," he blurted, "and I came here for Norman, our city editor. He asked me to find you if possible and tell you that he's in a box. You can help him by letting him use you as a bluff on that Center Street job of two years ago. He said you wouldn't get into any trouble through it, but it would fix him all right. You may understand what he means. I don't."

"I do," answered Kane with sudden energy. "If it hadn't been for Norman, I'd be in the pen for that. He's a good friend, boy. It must be some trouble with Kernan he's having. Tell him I'll trust him and back him up in any bluff he fancies. If I wasn't afraid for my own skin, I'd do more than bluff on it. Is it straight, son? You catch, do you?"

"Yes," Radbourne answered, and suddenly felt years younger. Without further ceremony Kane turned on his heel and walked towards the other end of the shop.

As Radbourne carelessly glanced about, it came to him as a shock that to some of its inmates this jail, dreary as it was, represented their only home.

"Some old time pets, eh?" queried Bruce, who had approached unobserved and stood at his elbow. "Did you get what you wanted?"

"Yes," Radbourne replied. "And if my sentence is

up, I guess I'll have to go now. I've stayed longer than I should."

As he passed the clanging door to freedom beyond, he heard a shrill whistle announce six o'clock. The sounds of labor ceased, and he caught a glimpse of forming lines of men. The day's work was done.

In the presence of the reproachful driver Radbourne felt half-smothered apprehension return. After all, Norman might not be able to choke Kernan off. He found him at his desk, smoking furiously and ruthlessly slaughtering copy.

"Well?" he said impassively.

"I found Kane," Radbourne announced, "and he says that he'll stay with any bluff you concoct. He seemed to be mighty grateful about something."

"Good!" Norman ejaculated with a look of grim satisfaction. "Now you come to dinner with me, Jim, and later I'll show you how I get satisfaction out of one of the worst bounders in the city. I mean the immaculate Kernan. Don't ask questions now. Just wait till he calls on us."

Together they sought a nearby restaurant. Norman was unusually gay and Radbourne forgot misgivings. After a leisurely cigar they again sought the office, closely preceding an unceremonious caller. He entered with a bang, and strode straight to Norman's desk with a savage air, which immediately established his identity in Radbourne's mind. He noted before the opening of oratorical hostilities that the man was tall and rather stout, of superficially good physique. He wore excellent clothes with ease, and but for a pair of shifty blue eyes as much of his face as a luxuriant beard revealed would

have been prepossessing. But his voice, arrogant and coarse, betrayed him under stress of excitement.

"I see you're here," he said brusquely to Norman, ignoring Radbourne's presence. "What are you going to do about it?"

"You refer?" Norman began interrogatively.

"To that cursed libel about my arrest, of course. What else would I refer to? What will you do about it?"

"Mr. Radbourne here," said Norman, with a gesture towards his somewhat astonished subordinate, "wrote the story in question and I thought it best to have him present when you called. I find he was in error regarding your connection with the check. Now what sort of satisfaction do you demand?"

"The humblest sort of an apology, and I'll write it myself. I'm not sure I won't sue you for libel, anyway. That would please my dear friend the Colonel."

"Will nothing less answer? Won't a statement of our error suffice?"

"Not by a damned sight! Will you apologize? It's eat crow, or be sued for libel."

"No," said Norman serenely, "we won't."

"Then take the consequence," Kernan snarled, as he turned to go.

"Hold on a minute," Norman called crisply. In his voice was a note of authority reporters knew. "I have here," and he took a folded paper from a pigeon-hole in his desk, "an interesting document, a confession."

"What do I care?" Kernan demanded. "Is it yours?"

"No, my dear man," with unruffled composure,



"Give me time, and I'll explain. I'm sure you'll be interested. This confession has to do"—his eyes studied Kernan's face keenly—"with an ugly scrape on Center Street two years ago. A young girl under the influence of liquor was taken to a questionable resort by a well-known man about town, a dirty scoundrel, by the way. But she was rescued from his clutches by a brother, and regard for her good name and the reputation of her family saved the gentleman, pardon the word, from the penitentiary. I had the story at the time, and the confession of a common scamp used as a tool in the job."

"What's all this got to do with me?" Kernan demanded.

"You are the man," Norman said. His voice was not raised.

"You can't prove anything," blustered Kernan; but his bravado was thinly veneered.

"I can," the city editor asserted with sudden energy. "I can put my finger on Kane within fifteen minutes. And he has offered to repeat his confession. He'll be satisfied to suffer for the sake of seeing the man who used him and then threw him down properly punished. I have nearly reached the conclusion that, after all, friendship should bow to justice. I'm inclined to give this tip to the police, after, of course, the *Globe* has a good story out of it. It will make a fine chaser for our story of to-day. The respected Kernan arrested one day for forgery, and the next for seduction."

With each sentence Kernan's consternation increased. As Norman leaned back in his chair with a disdainful smile, his visitor was a picture of craven terror.

"For God's sake," he impored, "do you want to ruin me?"

"No, Kernan, you want the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, I believe. Well, it's only fair for you to have it. So to-morrow morning with our apology we'll run this little story. Now if you'll kindly dictate our humble apology, so it will entirely meet your approbation?"

"Do you really mean to use that old affair?" whispered Kernan.

"It's both or nothing," Norman replied. "Do you still feel that you have an injured reputation?"

"But you won't use it?" Kernan reiterated. His voice and manner were amazingly servile.

"No, perhaps not," Norman said, thoughtfully. "After all, Kane's not all bad and I ought to have some regard for him. I think we understand each other. Good night."

With an air of weariness he replaced the confession in the pigeon-hole and turned to his desk. Kernan hesitated momentarily, then hastened out as though he feared assurance of safety would be withdrawn. When he had gone, Norman turned to Radbourne, and said with a touch of sternness:

"Let this teach you, Jim, that in reportorial work accuracy is more than godliness. As it happened your break gave me a chance to walk on a man I've despised ever since I knew him. But an honest man would have been as wild under the circumstances; and you and I would have walked the plank."

"Great Scott," said Radbourne, "but you did him up!"

"There was pious satisfaction in it," Norman admitted.

"Anyway, I'm tremendously obliged," Radbourne declared warmly. "It was my fault, and I couldn't have crawled out of the hole."

Further expression of gratification was nipped by the arrival of Colonel Robinson. He rarely came to the office at night. When he advanced towards Norman's desk with an air compounded of irritation and nervousness, the city editor knew his errand.

"What's this I hear about Kernan, Mr. Norman?" he demanded. "Mr. Lewis informs me that by a mistake his name was used in the *Globe* today as a forger. You know how I value accuracy in my men. And you know, too, that of all men Kernan is the worst to have such an advantage over the *Globe*. How did it happen?"

"Well," said Norman, "I should say through Littlefield's deliberate misstatement to Radbourne, who is comparatively new in the city. He gave Radbourne a wrong initial and used the right one in his own story. I ought to have detected the error, but it slipped through when I was busy."

"That doesn't help the matter," the Colonel said.

"No," the city editor admitted, "but some other things did. Mr. Kernan has called and threatened to sue for libel, demanded an apology, withdrawn all requests for satisfaction, and departed."

"What!"

"Precisely. There was a little matter of two years' standing on which the *Globe* had an exclusive, unused because it involved highly respected and innocent people. When I called Mr. Kernan's attention to it, he kindly

forebore to burden us with either suit or apology. So far as the *Globe* is concerned the story of his forgery stands."

Over the Colonel's face crept an expression of keen, if chastened, enjoyment, quickly suppressed.

"Of course," he said with a slight cough, "of course, we want only the truth, Mr. Radbourne. But I'm very glad it turned out this way. Good night."

"The old man's tickled nigh unto death," Norman remarked, as the door closed behind him.

## CHAPTER VII

It was late one afternoon in July, hot and humid. Patience was below par. The only man about the *Globe* office who seemed to enjoy life was Lewis. Backed by an electric fan, he lounged in his swivel chair, very negligee in attire and of serene mind. To the hurrying staff it seemed he spent the whole day in smoking and cutting queer paper patterns. Occasionally some reporter would audibly wonder what work the managing editor had to do, anyhow. But carping was the exception. Lewis was an easy-going superior, and the staff did not care to dispute his competency.

Radbourne was preparing for a leisurely stroll when the "Baron" made known the fact that the editor desired his presence.

"I've something for you, to-night," Lewis remarked. "I want you to cover the opening of the season at the Criterion. I intended to go, but it's so hot I think I'd better stick to my veranda. Give the performance a fair notice, for the management advertises well. Watch out for the Barings, a new musical team said to be first rate. One of them is reputed the youngest son of an English earl, who cut loose from his family last year through infatuation for a music-hall singer, and has been obliged to do a turn in order to make both ends meet. I don't take any stock in the nobility theory, but it may work into a story for the Sunday to-morrow."

Radbourne took the assignment with pleasure.

Though new to dramatic criticism, he had confidence in himself. He hazarded the Criterion with equanimity.

"New man, ain't you?" the treasurer inquired when he presented his order for seats at the box office. "Let me introduce you to Mr. Clancy, the press agent for the house."

Mr. Clancy rose from his seat and extended a hand of welcome under the grating of the ticket window. He was short and thin, red of nose and waistcoat. His general air was that of the road, dust-colored ties and very tired.

"Glad you came up to-night," he said hospitably, "for we want a good notice. Entitled to it. Our show is one of the big vaudeville attractions of the country. Really too expensive for Fordport, but we're giving the town a try with the bunch. Why, three of them were headliners on the circuit last winter. The Barings can't be duplicated as a quartet. Let me show you what the Muskegan *Bee* said of us."

Radbourne began to scan a blue-pencilled review thrust into his hand.

"Oh, don't bother with it now," Clancy interrupted. "Take it home with you and digest it. Curtain just going up. Run in after the show, and tell us how you like it."

From a point of vantage in the orchestra stalls Radbourne took notes on the various acts, until he saw that Thompson of the *Times*, a gray-haired veteran, was not writing a line. Then he sat back and enjoyed the performance in leisurely fashion.

A lady in baggy trousers had completed a laborious clog when he felt concentrated attention, and instinctively

glanced across the aisle. He encountered the eyes of a girl he had noted when he entered the theater. For she was worthy of note. She had a deal of fluffy hair, regular features, and eyes of blue, that looked at him with a glint of mischief. Apparently, he shared her attention with a sheet of paper, upon which she scribbled with a momentary lowering of her glance.

A second girl, whose appearance he could not afterwards remember, sat beside her, and a moment later leaned forward to whisper something which brought a flush to her cheek and sudden withdrawal of her eyes. She did not glance at Radbourne again, he thought. His own observations were rather frequent. When the curtain went down on the last act a stout woman barred him from the aisle, while she hunted for a penny dropped with her handkerchief. Subsequent speedy exit brought no sight of the mysterious, because missing, girl. And sudden recollection of his duty with the Barings squelched incipient resolution to search for her at random. Then, on second thought, he realized he had nothing to seek.

At the stage entrance his card enlisted the services of a call boy, who led him up a flight of rickety stairs, knocked at a door and left him with a laconic suggestion, "Barings." Sounds of boisterous merriment within ceased for a moment while a voice called out, "All right."

He pushed the door open and entered. Four quite ordinary young men were huddled in a small space, their makeup shining greasily at close range, and red silk doublets contrasting oddly with abbreviated underwear. Their appearance gave Radbourne a slight shock, with his recollections of stage beings fresh in mind.

In a club room four guardsmen with flowing locks

and the smartest of uniforms had lolled carelessly about a table, glasses in hand and puffing gayly at great pipes as they tossed off draughts of wine and sang songs dear to the public with art rare in vaudeville. Then Radbourne felt half inclined to believe the tale of culture and noble descent. Now the illusion was suddenly shattered.

"What can we do for you?" the smallest of the quartet inquired, as he rolled up his sleeves and stooped over a basin of water to part from his grease paint.

"I came to see you on a pointer given us by Mr. Clancy," Radbourne replied, tendering his card.

"Oh, yes. We are always good to reporters, eh, boys? Sit down on this trunk. So Clancy is working overtime. Did he give you the story of our humble basso, who is heir to a coronet?"

"Yes," admitted Radbourne.

"I thought so," the little man said with a grin. "There is our noble lord."

The tall individual referred to looked more like a graduate from a shoemaker's bench.

"You're a conversational artist, Billy," he said indifferently. "Con amore, and plain con. Tell him the tale, for I'm weary through singing for you three lazy beggars."

"Very well," quoth Billy, "here goes. Now you're a newspaper man and naturally know a thing or two." Radbourne did not deny the soft impeachment, and after an expectant pause Billy resumed, "So of course it's not necessary or healthy to give you guff. You do that for the people.

"My mother's name was Considine at last accounts. My father, unfortunately, I'm not acquainted with. I



inherit my histrionic honors legitimately, for my mother was a singer and dancer in the Opera Comique in days I know not of. She gave me my voice and taught me what I know about extraction of music from a viola.

"Carter, that lush blossom of the stage who sits on your right, has been with me five years, so I know his tragic history. His father is an Ohio butcher, poor but honest. I think it was the shame of the latter trait that drove Carter from his family to playing a B-flat cornet in a circus. This at the tender age of sixteen. Three years later I met him in a hospital and saved him for the boards. As you doubtless observed during our unequalled performance, he very ably sucks his pipe, and caresses harp or heart-strings.

"Our left, Mitchell, is not a credit to our troupe, I am sorry to say. He had the effrontery to graduate from a conservatory and teach music in a young ladies' seminary. As a judgment for all this he was made to fall desperately in love with a fair pupil. Your expression is not sufficiently pathetic. She married him and is with us always, appropriating his salary each Tuesday eve. Observe his lean and hungry look. His sorrows have taught him to coax from his violin music sweeter than Ysaye cajoles. But he's married and the public can't appreciate it.

"'Last, but not least,' to quote the classic, is our noble friend, Lord Tweedmouth, traveling incognito through this world as Martin Swett. Among jealous members of the profession circulates a story that he was rescued from a bakeshop by a wealthy and manless maiden, somewhat aged, who saw good in his manly frame and admired the beauty of his lusty voice. 'Tis said she had his voice

'cultivated' in the language of rural journals, and that he basely balked at matrimony because she refused to abandon corkscrew curls. Such a slander he does not deem it dignified to deny.

"But there is another version, which we shall be glad to prove by Clancy, who cannot tell a lie. It reveals the fact that he is Lord Tweedmouth, youngest son of the Duke of Wynsborough and late lieutenant in the Scotch Grays. It informs you—I see you have a valued copy of the *Muskegan Bee* in your hand—that after dissipating a large fortune at Monte Carlo and on the turf, he jilted a beautiful girl who later died from unrequited love, and eloped with a Gaiety fairy, thereby cutting loose from the paternal purse. We have seen the Gaiety fairy, but not the purse. My lord-concealed his noble origin from us until one day in Chicago, last winter, he incautiously confided the story to a press agent. We have to be very guarded in our conversation with press agents. Somehow they tell one's most private affairs. Now, I think I have given you a candid statement of facts. Haven't I, my lord?"

"You're in good form, Billy," the big singer lazily allowed.

"I am indeed encouraged," said Billy. "Now I think all you require for a kind notice of our humble act is contained in the *Bee*. Of course, we don't want our private life paraded before the public. But we will submit as a favor to Clancy, who has to earn his salary. And since you're doing it for him, you might as well take his version of my lord and the rest. We cordially endorse it. Is there more we can do?"

"No," said Radbourne, rising and smiling, "I don't think there is. Permit me to remark that you're an entertaining chap."

"Don't mention it," Billy benignly responded. "Mother always said so. Will you go out with us for a drop? No. Well then, addio, and good luck."

"The romantic story about one of the Barings being an English lord in disguise is a fake," Radbourne reported to Blair fifteen minutes later. "But it's a good enough story, it seems, from a copy of the Muskegan *Bee* Clancy gave me. He said the *Bee* wasn't read in Fordport, and we could work it over."

"Well," Blair said meditatively, "he's given us a cut of Wynsborough Hall and the girl who suicided for love. I need a feature in a hurry to fill the thirteenth page. I've been holding it for the baseball, but that will have to go on a later page. Grind out a column in a hurry. We owe the Criterion something."

Next morning readers of the *Sunday Globe* were regaled with romance which might have come from the deathless pages of Bertha M. Clay.

As Radbourne sauntered home in the early morning, after writing a non-committal review of the Criterion bill, his thoughts reverted to the girl who had shown singular interest in his appearance. He did not need to consult a mirror to realize he had no charms to rivet the attention of strangers. The unusual behavior of the unknown puzzled him more than a little. She was obviously a lady, and there had been no trace of flirtatious inclination in her manner. For ten minutes at least Radbourne revolved the episode in the comforting shel-

ter of his bed. Then he fell asleep. In the morning it recurred, and through the day he half-unconsciously scrutinized each passing head of golden hair. But vigilance went unrewarded, and recollection ceased to tantalize.

## CHAPTER VIII

With no convulsion in Fordport newspaper circles, July dragged through its burning length, and resigned to August the task of keeping sweltering humanity on the gridiron. It was the hottest summer in the city's history. Any one knew that. Radbourne was glad one night when Norman announced to him that he would begin a fortnight's vacation on the following Monday.

But after the first flush of satisfaction came doubt whether, after all, the City Hall beat would be properly covered in his absence. He forgot that the *Globe* had been in existence for forty years, in which he had assisted it for six months. The thought that if matters became a little involved his worth would be better appreciated afforded him some consolation, however. For the next three days he deluged the young reporter selected to substitute for him with such a multitude of reminders and pointers that the beginning of his duty found that youth in a maze of distorted recollection.

Where to spend the vacation, his first as a full-fledged worker, puzzled Radbourne a bit at first. He had no mind to tarry in Waterwick. Haines, a young lawyer with whom he had become friendly, solved the question.

"Ever been in Westover?" he asked, when Radbourne explained his lack of a place of resort.

"No," Radbourne replied promptly, "never heard of it. Where is it?"

"It's a quaint little spot down the coast," Haines ex-

plained, as he meditatively puffed his cigar "Beautifully situated, climate delightful, and a considerable summer population of a cosmopolitan character which may attract you. Fond of studying types?"

"You know the badge of newspaperdom."

"Very well, there's your place, then. Years ago an intellectual woman, whose conception of universal blessedness ignored the fact that a condition and not a theory confronts us, established at Westover a summer school of philosophy with lectures by big guns in the fine arts, religion, science, and pretty nearly everything the wicked world puzzles over, even newspaper-making. By dint of personal magnetism she usually yards a brilliant galaxy ranging from American professors to red-robed priests from India's coral strands. They are the famous sands of song, aren't they?"

"Seriously, there are some very clever people there, and you will be forced to absorb some wisdom. It's not what it used to be, but still interesting. Lastly, you will be safe from the wiles of the designing woman. Besides serious ladies, of course quite beyond your age, the female sex is only represented by a few young things unhappily chained to maternal chariot wheels. For so much advice I would charge a client twenty dollars. Do you go?"

"You are persuasive," Radbourne said, after a moment's deliberation. "Thanks for information and advice. I shall go to-morrow morning. That leaves scant time, so I'll say good-by. Let you know later how much I broaden my mental bean."

Early next morning Radbourne boarded a train that rumbled through Middle State districts on its way to New York. Through the long reach of afternoon sun-

shine he rode along the New England coast, with its panorama of wooded hillside, pebbly beach and serpentine inlets. Here and there a little village to recall mobilized society.

The brakeman's raucous yell of "West-over!" roused him from a brown study of the probability that Littlefield would scoop the *Globe* on some important City Hall news during his absence. He had scarcely time to collect his wits and baggage before, with protesting snorts, the engine recommenced its forward march. Evidently Westover was not one of the places where trains stop ten minutes for refreshments.

The station was a little wooden box dumped beside the track in a clayey soil. A rutty road encircled it, and crossed the railroad to disappear over a slight rise, flanked here and there by farmhouses which seemed to follow the Dutch fashion of subordination to the barn. On the other side a road climbed out of sight over a high hill whose steep side was green with foliage and grassy slope. Occasional patches of flowering shrubs made brilliant spots. It was not an imposing landscape. But Radbourne sniffed with delight vitalizing air compounded from keen breezes of the open sea and aromatic breath of the pine.

This aspect of nature Radbourne noted after casual survey of his immediate surroundings. They consisted of the station-agent, telegraph-operator, baggage-master and postmaster, who was hustling about in his shirt-sleeves with an overloaded fountain pen slowly staining his right ear; a small assortment of budding youths and graybeards, who might have been prototypes of the cast in the husking scene of any rural drama; some ladies of

uncertain age, whose appearance Radbourne could not afterward recall, and a few men of scientific aspect, arrived on his train. In the horse-shed behind the station several nags attached to beach-wagons, barges and the like struggled with flies but paid no attention to the omnipresent Ford.

Radbourne did not feel that he was singled out for special attention. It occurred to him that the place must have more life than was evident, somewhere behind the horizon. While he mused, the platform audience dwindled to himself and one sheepish public carrier. The station agent had become the postmaster for the nonce, and was carefully thumbing a pile of letters behind a tall case with many small compartments. It bore in gilt script across its front a sign, "Post Office."

"Where you goin'?" inquired the carrier indifferently, as he leaned on his left leg, after a circuitous approach.

"To Allen's," Radbourne replied, consulting a slip on which Haines had written an address. "Do you take me?"

"For about a quarter, and ten extry for the trunk."

"Very well," Radbourne remarked briefly, "you're my man." Without further delay the baggage was loaded, they mounted the driver's seat, chosen by Radbourne for its superior elevation, and jogged away for the big hill behind the station. Up and down the road wound, its clay gradually displaced by reddish sand which sifted in a fine cloud from the wheels. In time came long stretches partly cushioned by needles from avenues of pines which touched branches overhead and made a filter for soft sunlight. Then appeared open stretches with glimpses of well-ordered farms through rows of ancient



but sturdy willows. And still the air of the sea mingled with the breath of the pines. It was very picturesque. But where was the ocean?

After long watching for shelving beach or racing breakers, Radbourne ventured to question the driver whose conversation had thus far been restricted to his remark about the quarter and ten cents "extry," with sundry grunts when Radbourne spoke of the weather, or the prosperous look of the countryside.

"I suppose we reach the ocean pretty soon?" he said tentatively.

"No."

"Isn't it here?"

"Two miles beyond Allen's. You're on the river."

"What river?" Radbourne asked, with a sudden doubt of the value of Haines's opinion regarding what constituted location on the coast.

"The Keona. Here we are." With a flourish barring further question he swung his horses into a lane and rattled down to the door of a large old-fashioned house. From the depths of a capacious hammock a somewhat emaciated woman appeared. "Hullo," she said.

"Hullo," returned Radbourne amiably.

"Is this Allen's?"

"Yes," she said as she gained her feet and approached the driver, who awaited an order for disposal of Radbourne's trunk.

"Have you come to stay with us?" she continued.

"If I am permitted. This is Mrs. Allen?"

"No. I'm one of the boarders. I'll find her for you, if you'll come in the house for a minute."

Radbourne dutifully followed to a screen door. With her hand on the knob the woman turned to fling a question at him.

"Are you in the Thought?"

"I beg your pardon," Radbourne stammered.

"Are you in the Thought?"

"I don't quite understand."

"I see you're not one of us," the woman said, with manifest disappointment. "Wait here in the parlor for a moment."

As Radbourne sat looking at a collection of family photographs, Mrs. Allen, bustling, stout and genial, appeared.

"You want a room," she said before Radbourne had time to request lodging. "I haven't one vacant to-day, but you can look at one which will be empty to-morrow. This way, please, and excuse my haste. With twenty-five boarders on my hands I'm rushed these days. Miss Ford told me you were here several minutes ago, but I couldn't get away from the butcher. I'll just put you in my second parlor with Mr. Smalley to-night. I guess he won't mind, if he is a little freaky."

In breathless haste Radbourne was led up two flights of stairs, given a fleeting glance at a room, and whisked down to the parlor again, with instructions to leave his trunk there for the night. Having made a hasty toilet for dinner, he discovered that dinner was supper. West-over clung to a custom of old country days.

As Radbourne stood with his hand on the doorknob, a dialogue in the hall attracted his attention.

"I have put a young man in with you to-night, Mr. Smalley," Mrs. Allen said. "He is to have a vacant

room on the second floor to-morrow. I thought you wouldn't mind having him to-night. I put a screen up between your cots, and he seems like a real nice young man."

"Of course," a nervous masculine voice replied, "but I hope his vibrations are congenial. You know I cannot endure an antagonistic nervous system. If he doesn't vibrate properly, I shan't sleep to-night. We students of the occult have to pay for our clear vision, you know. But I'll try."

Radbourne retreated from the door as the dubious Mr. Smalley entered. He was a spare, gray-haired man of about fifty. Small blue eyes twitched so that it was difficult to get their expression. And a constant fluttering of his hands suggested more than a bowing acquaintance with St. Vitus's dance.

Since he showed no desire for acquaintance, Radbourne passed out with a nod. From the yard came a merry piping of the flageolet, and the musician stepped forward to greet him. He was a dapper little man, whose youthful manner disputed ocular evidence of a half-century or more of existence. Behind him came several children, prancing to the music.

"You are Mr. Radbourne, I guess," he remarked as he paused for breath. "I'm Allen. Hope you'll like us and stay a while. I can't say you'll fancy many of the girls here. They're leftovers, mostly; all beautiful within, but mighty homely outside. Are you in the Thought?"

"Don't know," Radbourne replied. "That's the second time I've had that fired at me. What does it mean?"

"I can't tell you. But most of the people who come

here are interested in the Westover summer school. Cousin Emma Frye founded it. She's got a lot of toney talkers here from all over the world. Gosh, they sling language! Then a whole lot of other people, little bugs, come to hear 'em. And they say they're seeking 'Light.' 'Tisn't for me to say whether they're a little queer. I'm mighty glad Emma is smart enough to bring so many here. It's good for the place. But the most of 'em are old maids trying to forget they're lonesome. Between us, you and me, they remind me of the miner's cat that was caught in a blast and pushed up into the air about three hundred feet. There she stayed for a few minutes, clawing after things she couldn't reach.

"But you'll learn what they are doing fast enough. If they don't sandbag you with it at the first bow, I miss my guess. Some of them are nice. There's Miss Annie Ogden, the governor's daughter. She's an artist, and only cares about painting some of the places round here. Don't let on I told you about her father. She don't want the rest of the folks to know who he is. I'll give you some more pointers; but supper is ready now and you must be hungry. You'll have to hoe in to keep up with the mental healers. Ida, that's Mrs. Allen, says she notices the most spiritual ones eat the most."

A girl appeared in the doorway and lazily rang a large bell. On the second stroke people seemed to swarm in the lane and yard. Their former hiding-places were mysterious to Radbourne. The ordinary clatter of knives and forks and a subdued conversational hum at once commenced, to continue until he innocently helped himself from a platter of chicken. As he raised the first

bit on his fork, he saw Miss Ford looking at him with obvious horror.

"Young man," she asked funereally, "are you a cannibal?"

"Why, no —" Radbourne stammered in astonishment.

"You are a flesh-eater," she pursued accusingly.

"But this is poultry," he protested.

She viewed him compassionately. "We are God, and so is all creation. The chicken is your brother as much as the pussy willow."

Was this the "Thought"? As Radbourne pondered, speechless, Mr. Smalley lent an approving voice from his left hand.

"No doubt the young gentleman has never had the subject properly presented to him before. We of the new thought have really a herculean task to perform. Mrs. Reed would be the one to enlighten him on this matter. Where is she to-night?"

No one answered for a moment. Then a timid little woman, with eyes that seemed always on the verge of tears, explained with hesitation:

"She wasn't feeling quite well to-night, and decided to remain in her room. It's a little touch of cold she caught while sitting on the ground at the Swami's talk this morning. It's unfortunate, for she was very anxious to join Mr. Bjornsen's nature conference at the Druid Rock to-night."

"After all," Smalley said in tones of mild disapprobation, "perhaps she isn't the one to teach Mr. Radbourne. It seems she hasn't learned not to be ill."

"Do you mean to say that one's will can ward off disease," Radbourne asked in incautious surprise.

"Certainly," answered Smalley with an air of forbearance. "One experiences pain only through running counter to nature. When once we live in tune with the infinite, all illness vanishes."

In sudden impulse Radbourne brought his heel down heavily on a foot which had fidgetted with his chair during the debate. With an "Ouch!" and a look of pain Smalley rose hastily.

"I beg your pardon," Radbourne said. "Did I hurt your foot?"

"Not at all," the immune one assured him. "Not at all."

Miss Ford rose from the table with Smalley. Also rose a large yellow dog with mangy aspect and crippled gait.

"Let me put him out," Radbourne volunteered. "How did he get in here?"

"He is mine," Miss Ford said frigidly.

"Oh, you bring him to meals."

"Yes," serenely, "and to lectures too. I'm educating him for the next incarnation. I don't know what he will be."

"Yes," said Radbourne weakly, pondering this amazing conception of the Infinite as the table thinned out gradually. He fancied himself alone when his ears caught a slight movement behind him. Turning, he met the amused glance of the girl he had seen at the Criterion. He recognized her at once, and she spoke first, as to an acquaintance.

"It was such a droll way of refuting Mr. Smalley's theory. But you have to be very careful in speech, if you dread being regarded as a heathen. Then, too, it's

such a pity to destroy ideals you don't intend to replace. Women so adore masculine opinion that a word sways them."

"And you?" Radbourne said, interrogatively.

"Oh, I don't count. I'm only a Philistine down here to do a little work at painting landscapes, not souls."

"Then you are Miss Ogden."

"I may as well confess. I see Mr. Allen has confided the secret to you. He's given it away in secrecy to each new arrival of the last fortnight. I couldn't have done better with a press agent. Let's talk of something else. You haven't told me your name."

"James Radbourne. I'm on the *Fordport Globe*," Radbourne hardly knew why he added the latter information.

"You haven't shown a sign of it yet. Perhaps you are not old enough in the profession to have acquired its deathless curiosity. I'm not even sure that you care to know what I was doing when you caught me staring at you so brazenly in a vaudeville interlude."

"Of course I do," Radbourne said. "But I couldn't ask you. I naturally wondered what you were writing."

"Nothing. I was sketching. For you seemed just the figure I wanted in a picture I was doing."

"May I inquire—" Radbourne began.

"Yes, you may. But I'll not gratify your curiosity now. Some day you may see the picture. Anyway, we must go. Do you know the risk you are taking?"

"What?" asked bewildered Radbourne.

"Five minutes more, and each and every person on the grounds will know that you came here to see me, and are deeply in love."

"Do they gossip here?"

"In quantities. It's very soothing for the nerves. And nerves, you know, are at the bottom of female religion, as a rule. But here is the militant Allen. I resign you to his care. Good night."

She was gone before Radbourne could respond, or Allen utter the welcome trembling on his lips.

"I see you are already acquainted with Miss Ogden," he said affably. "Let me introduce you to Dr. Cushman of Boston. He's an old hand here."

Radbourne shook hands with the doctor, a stout middle-aged man whose face was screened by large blue spectacles and luxuriant black whiskers. Deliberate in manner, he spoke with the air of sucking his words like sweetmeats before he let them go.

"I didn't see you at tea to-night," Radbourne hazarded as a conversational ice-breaker.

"No," the doctor explained. "We are to have a nature meeting with Professor Bjornsen to-night. And a few of us who understand the occult forces in their relations to natural objects are fasting to-day, that we may better establish connection with spirits sought. We start for the meeting in a few minutes. Perhaps you'll join us."

"Go," Allen said. "You'll like it."

The doctor seemed not to notice the flippancy of the little man's endorsement. He waited gravely for an answer.

"Yes, thank you," Radbourne replied on sudden impulse, as he shelved a half-formed intention of following and seeing more of Miss Ogden.

A little later he found himself one of a singular party.



There were ten women, all types except the young and fair, and most of them queerly dressed. Smalley, Dr. Cushman and himself furnished the male element, and a blinking lantern gave them light. The highways of Westover had neither gaslights nor sputtering electrics to encourage travel after dark. When twilight and many mosquitoes had arrived the line of march was taken up under the doctor's direction. He commanded, lantern in hand, from the midst of a hollow square in which the men were surrounded by a female guard. Radbourne wondered if it was thus arranged to prevent their escape.

Presently they met a band of roistering town boys, who fell in behind and began to sing lustily,

“The animals went in two by two,  
The elephant and the kangaroo —”

No one retorting, they ceased their attentions. Other parties appeared with their twinkling lights, and Radbourne saw that men were generally scarce. After a time they left the road, and began to pick their way through a rough pasture to woods looming dark beyond. With barbed-wire fences and brambles the women seemed as much troubled as the beautiful of their sex,—silly creatures who had never met their subconscious selves. Stumbling and calling to one another, the pilgrims plodded through the darkness, following the flashing lantern lights.

A sadly winded party Dr. Cushman led into an open space in the heart of the woods, and grounded his lantern with a sententious remark,—“Here's the Druid Rock.” As the rear guard struggled in Radbourne took a survey of surroundings. In the center of the clearing reared

a giant boulder; and all about it tall pines aspired to a sky whose fleecy clouds dimmed the stars. Under them stood the silent figures awaiting a master spirit.

When arrivals ceased a massive figure approached the rock. Smalley whispered in Radbourn's ear, "Dr. Bjornsen." The darkness concealed all but his outline. Only his voice gave clue to personality. It was full and strident, with a metallic ring.

"My people are here," he said "Put out the lights." One by one the points of flame disappeared. "I have called you here to-night," he resumed, "to show you, my disciples, something of phenomena I have often encountered. While resting by this rock I was called by various voices. I recognized them as voices of Druids, who sacrificed here, on this very spot, centuries ago." A tremor traveled the circle. "To-night under the full moon, whose rays we shall await, you may hear what you believe. They will come to meet your faith.

"But first," the doctor said impressively, "I will arrange you by your colors. In that way may best be generated the vibrations necessary to make ourselves one with nature." He took the hand of the woman nearest him and held it for a moment. Then he led her to a corner of the clearing. "Yellow," he said, as he left her seated on the ground. The next he led to another corner, with the word, "Green." Radbourne ventured a whispered inquiry to Smalley regarding the color line.

"We give out vibrations of colored light, graded by our mental and spiritual condition," Smalley explained. "Yellow is the highest and green the lowest."

Further explanation was prevented by Bjornsen's approach. Presently Radbourne found himself seated with

the yellows. Nearby he saw Smalley — with the greens.

The circle was now complete. Its members squatted submissively about Bjornsen and the rock.

"As we wait for our brother, the moon," said the Doctor, "let us concentrate."

A dead hush succeeded and continued, until Radbourne, glancing at the dim mysterious figures about him, was chilled with feeling they were but specters, and he the only human. Slowly the minutes dragged. He felt an almost uncontrollable desire to shout, or do something, anything. The moon rose and gently flooded the enclosure.

At length Bjornsen stood up in their midst, and an audible sigh of relaxation followed. "Our brothers will not come to-night," he said. "An antagonistic influence is present." Radbourne wriggled in fear of discovery and disgraceful expulsion. "But to-morrow morning at ten I will meet you on Mt. Salvart, and then, I trust, nothing will impede us. Let us now manifest our oneness with the Infinite by singing 'Omnipresence.'"

A female voice started a queer chant Radbourne later identified as a feature at meetings of the school.

"Om-iny-presence-om-iny-presence,  
Manifest thyself in me."

They sang it with devout swell and diminuendo, over and over again. Then the lanterns began to lead kindly light, and Radbourne resumed his white man's burden of taking women out of the woods. Once or twice they lost their way. But eventually the highway was reached, and Allen's.

As Radbourne entered his room, Smalley was already

in bed and snoring peacefully. Radbourne felt that his vibrations were good. For, sometimes waking, he heard the stertorous breathing of his psychic companion through the night.

## CHAPTER IX

Early next morning Radbourne quietly stepped from his room, intent on seeing more of the surroundings. Strolling through the gardens, he found a rustic arbor and Miss Ogden. She was seated on a bench, and busily engaged with a pack of cards. Her back was towards him, and he stepped stealthily to surprise her. As a twig snapped under his foot, she paused in her calculations and called carelessly:

"Good morning, Mr. Radbourne."

"Did you see me?" he asked in chagrin.

"No, but all the other heads about are too weary with wisdom to be abroad at this hour. They are trained to wake a half hour before breakfast. It lacks an hour of that now. You observe my Sibylline occupation, I suppose, and want your fortune told. All men do."

"Do you guarantee accuracy?" Radbourne asked.

"As much as any one does. Years ago, when I was young, and you wore pinafores, I was on friendly terms with a Romany woman. I learned from her, and sometimes I do it for my friends. Or I amuse myself. On second thought, you are not entitled to your fortune yet."

Radbourne was a bit nettled.

"Perhaps," he said with a tinge of irony. "You speak like one aged. May I inquire your years?"

"You may, but I'm not required to answer. All the manuals of etiquette would teach you that such a question

is unpardonable. I am not reluctant, however, to confess twenty-four summers. It's not necessary to inquire your age. You're evidently under twenty-five. I'll be generous, though, and not expose your tender years to our fellow guests. Many of them are mentally but sweet sixteen, and will revere you, if you maintain funereal gravity. It's woman's ancient delusion regarding man's superior intellect. Isn't it queer how we have enjoyed our vassalage?"

"Don't you think you could show me some of the attractions?" Radbourne asked. He had an impression that the pointed conversation was not reflecting glory on his sex.

"It would be better than quarreling," Miss Ogden said judicially. "I fancy we shall quarrel a deal about silly things. It will be rather a relief from the solemn squabbles over the unknowable, eagerly supported at meals three times a day. Put the cards in your pocket, and I'll show you my favorite spot near the river."

She led the way through an opening in the trees. Radbourne followed, and saw from a bluff a broad, swiftly flowing river, its waters glinting in the early sunlight. In the north a little city lifted its spires across the shimmering expanse of a great bay. To the south, where the hurrying current buried itself in the bosom of the Atlantic, the steeples of an old colonial town stood out against the sky. Beyond the hazy blue of half-encircling hills a distant mountain lifted its head.

"The Keona," Miss Ogden said. "Do you like it?"

"It is the most beautiful river I have ever seen," Radbourne declared simply.

"And this spot the most beautiful on its shore. I'm

painting the family cemetery round the corner of the hedge. Come and look at it."

In a sheltered corner on the hillside a cluster of weatherbeaten head stones, mottled with moss and bowed by years, marked the graves of the forefathers. Radbourne stooped to read the inscriptions. With one exception, they were illegible. A crumbling tablet bore a homely epitaph more effective than studied eulogy:

" Mary Allen

1715-1760

She was good to all "

" I wonder how many of these feverish dissectors of self will deserve such a tribute," mused Miss Ogden. " But come," with a sudden return of vivacity, " we must hurry to breakfast. If you are hungry, it's not discreet to trust thy neighbor as thyself. There is the bell now. I'll beat you in a race to the head of the lane."

She did, though Radbourne protested it was because he stumbled over a root.

The dining-room was well filled when they entered, and animated debate regarding the unity and duality of chairs and trees raged. Miss Ford maintained the cause of duality against a woman who was at a disadvantage through more imperative demands of her appetite. While she prepared a pyramid of buckwheats Miss Ford launched an avalanche of words, whose meaning Radbourne did not fathom. Few contained less than twelve letters.

" Perhaps you won't mind telling me the exact mean-

ing of 'unity' and 'duality' in this case," he said. "I'm a trifle hazy."

"Why, duality," Miss Ford began, "that's the principle of spirit and matter."

"Yes, and what is the principle, please?"

Miss Ogden coughed suspiciously, as the majority at the table looked mild astonishment at such ignorance. Miss Ford hesitated.

"Perhaps I can get at that better through your astral," she said presently.

"I'm sorry, but I don't think I can define that."

"Why, that is *linga caira*."

"Still, I'm in the dark," he insisted, ignoring signals of distress.

"I'm afraid, Mr. Radbourne," she remarked acidly, "that you'll never be a Yogi."

"Let me see," Radbourne reflected, "hasn't that something to do with masonry?"

"It is a man," Miss Ford explained coldly, "from whom all human passions, hatred, and anger, and jealousy, have departed. We have a few of them in this country."

"So I fancy," Radbourne said with a smile. "Still, I don't recall meeting any."

A gloomy silence fell, and Smalley made a valiant attempt to revive conversation.

"I think after all, Mr. Radbourne, you are one of us, though unconsciously. Your vibrations are splendid. They didn't disturb me at all last night; and I'm very sensitive to such things."

"I'm not," Radbourne said decidedly. Miss Ogden



seemed to be choking. "I'm not at all, but your vibrations bothered me."

Smalley's face contorted in agitation.

"Really," he stammered, "really!"

"Yes, really," Radbourne reaffirmed. "Your snores, I mean."

"Extraordinary," Smalley murmured. Then his habit of consulting Miss Ford asserted itself.

"What would you interpret from it, Miss Clara?"

"Really, Mr. Smalley"—the natural spinster asserted herself—"I am unable to say."

"Medical men say it's a question of breathing," Radbourne volunteered.

"I fear I shall be late for the nine o'clock talk on the Oversoul," Smalley remarked as he rose hastily.

"We are going, too," chirped several ladies in unison. Presently Radbourne and Miss Ogden were left alone.

"You're in disgrace," she said between gusts of laughter. "If you continue like this, you will soon ruin psychic table-talk—and earn my gratitude. You were cruel, though, in your persistent effort to convince Miss Ford of the obvious fact that she didn't know what she meant."

"I suppose I was rather rude," Radbourne reflected. "But I think your covert encouragement was partially responsible. Let's go to Mt. Salvart and see how Bjornsen's devotees commune with nature. They have a smoke-talk with a few chosen spirits of the past at ten this morning. Last night we got only brambles and buncombe. To-day I want to see the fruit."

"Very well. But first I must sketch for a while. No,

you can't come. I'm nervous about painting before people I'm not well acquainted with."

"I suppose I'll have to obey," Radbourne allowed. "But if I can't see you sketch, I think you might promise me a view of that old tombstone before I go away."

"Maybe I'll do it for you," she said carelessly. "It will depend on your conduct. Good-by, now. I'm off to work."

Radbourne watched as she walked vigorously through the field, camp-stool and paint-box in hand, her head lost in a pink sunbonnet. His vague musing on her alluring personality permitted the undetected approach of Allen wearing his habitual smile.

"Getting well acquainted, I see," he said, with a nod towards the disappearing figure. "Best girl we ever had here, and smart."

"Does she paint much?" Radbourne inquired.

"Well, I should say," Allen remarked, with enthusiasm. "She's painted my cove and the old birches down on the point, just as natural as a colored photograph. I ain't a judge, but they look like life. A man from New York was here last week, and he said her pictures had been in the London Academy. Pretty good, is it?"

"Rather," Radbourne said, and inwardly berated himself for presumption in asking her for a sketch.

"I've got to take two tabbies out for an airing this morning," Allen continued. "Would you like to go and be educated?"

"Thanks, but I promised to walk at ten."

"Don't need to ask who it is," Allen affirmed. "It's good judgment. Don't ever be a landlord. If fair guests are fond of me, I can't shy. I might as well take

this morning's installment out early and return in good season. Enjoy yourself."

With a jaunty swing he passed toward the stable, whistling "The Girl I Left Behind Me."

Radbourne settled back in his hammock. Listening to birds in neighboring trees he fell into a day-dream. A nondescript vehicle rattled down the lane. When opposite the house the driver tossed a bag into the yard, yelling, "Mail!" in a robust voice. The bag fell almost at Radbourne's feet, and he drew it to him, inspecting its contents. There was a *Globe* for him, and he straightway became dead to surroundings, while he raced through the columns of Fordport news. With a mixture of relief and regret he saw that City Hall was well covered. His substitute had proved an apt student. While he was still absorbed in the paper it was suddenly taken from his hands. Miss Ogden confronted him with an amused expression.

"You are early, Miladi," Radbourne laughed, as he scrambled to his feet.

"Why did you call me Miladi?" she asked imperatively.

"I don't know," he said, astonished. "It just happened, that's all. I am sorry, if you don't like it."

"I'm not offended," she said slowly, "but it startled me. Some one I was fond of always called me that. It sounded so strangely from you."

"I won't do it again," he assured her.

"I don't mind if you do. After all, it preserves a pleasant memory. We must be friends, and it's stupid to 'mister' or 'miss' one you associate with at a summer place. So you may call me 'Miladi,' and I'll

call you 'Monsieur.' Quite droll, for you resemble a Hottentot as much as a Frenchman. Is it a compact?"

"Yes," Radbourne said with vast relief. "But tell me how you happen to return so soon. It hasn't been an hour since you left, unless my watch forsakes standard time."

"I feel restless this morning, and it's useless to paint in what one must scrape out. Then, perhaps I repented having forbidden you to accompany me. I could give you more possibilities, if you need them. You are ready for Mt. Salvart and nature, I suppose, so we may as well journey on."

"I ought to apologize," Radbourne said awkwardly, after a few moments' silent tramping. "It was presumptuous in me to ask you for a sketch. I didn't know you were a crack artist; that you painted for money, you know."

"The voluble Allen has been instructing you still more, I see," she said brusquely. "The fact that I sometimes sell a picture doesn't alter the fact that I shall be pleased to do a sketch for you. And you are to take it without compunction. I don't need money now, so it's not a deprivation. Some day I may marry a poor man and use it for bread and butter. But not now. Do you dare dispute me?"

"I don't suppose so. But can I in any way recompense you for the gift?"

"By being very civil—and breaking up dyspeptic argument at meals. If you had to remain long, I should feel wicked in making such a request. But we both go soon, and I do want to eat occasionally without theological condiment. And you may sometimes carry my kit,

if you want to. It's rather heavy for me. Are you satisfied?"

"I am very happy," Radbourne said, with wonder that she had voluntarily accorded the privilege refused an hour before.

"And still unsaved, too. Well, let's drop personalities and dissection. I wonder if we have mutual friends in Fordport. I used to go there often."

Radbourne found Miladi knew his adopted city well. She seemed astonishingly familiar with newspaper conditions and politics.

"Of course, it's all due to the Governor," she explained. "Since mother died, he has only me to confide in. And you know — perhaps, though you don't — that every man must confide in some woman. In my case I take the secrets that might go to some female lobbyist or other ogress."

As they chatted, they reached the sloping sides of the high hill called Mt. Salvart, and ascended a winding path to the summit. Suddenly they came upon Bjornsen and his followers, already diligently at work.

At the foot of a scrub pine Smalley sat on a juniper bush. His face was lifted to the sky, and a last year's robin's nest. He might have been in a trance, so stiff he seemed. Hard by Dr. Cushman guarded a huge boulder, to whose granite breast he pressed his ear, as though to catch pulsations of a heart whose beats are years. He did not heed the crimsoning sunburn on his bare and polished head, or the chipmunk that perched just above him, with a staccato bark of perplexity. Miss Ford solicitously protected a wild-rose bush. And a poor stout lady, who received Radbourne's sympathy, sat

on the grass with her head thrown back at a perilous angle in her determined effort to follow without rising the lazy progress of a cloud, slowly wafted through the sky.

"What is the class doing this morning?" Radbourne asked Bjornsen, the only person responsive to external influence.

"They are taking the interpretations from natural forces assigned them," beamed the professor. "I am sure we shall have fine results. Perhaps you will join us."

"No, thanks," Radbourne replied hastily. "We will sit for a few moments and learn your methods."

He stooped to a seat on the turf, and from his coat pocket tumbled the cards with which Miladi had intrusted him. The king of clubs was uppermost, and others of the royal family conspicuously placed.

"I think I promised to take Miss Ogden rowing," he said, after wild efforts to restore the pasteboards to his pocket. "I shall be pleased to attend your class again."

"Perhaps it is full," the professor said hastily. "I shall see."

"Better give them to me," Miladi said, when a safe distance from the worshippers. "You don't handle them expertly enough. I'm afraid you'll break them next time."

"Sorry to deprive you of the exhibit," Radbourne said, "but I had to flunk when I saw Bjornsen's aversion. I suppose I spoiled your morning for you."

"Not at all. You promised to take me rowing, didn't you?"

"Of course, if you care to go. That's one thing I can do. But I haven't a boat."

"They let them at Westover Inn. That's near the lecture tent you haven't seen yet. I have bestowed smiles on the clerk, an East Indian prince in a former incarnation, but now tutor to a son of a pork packer. I think he will find us a nice boat. Some are 'hogged,' they say. A good name for the style. I learned its significance one day after painful effort to coax a craft with a shape like a cream puff across the river when the tide ran hard. Let's hope better fortune attends us to-day. For it's hot, and I don't want you to melt before my eyes. On second thought, don't melt at all."

Radbourne felt that fortune had been kind to him, and replied to Miladi's badinage in merry fashion. Habitual gravity had won him the sobriquet of "Deacon" among the staff of the *Globe*.

As they neared a dusty road which nature and the road-machine made a quagmire in early spring and a bed of sand in summer, Miladi halted, pointing to the right. Radbourne followed the gesture, and saw a singular group pacing up a lane.

"The Swami and the Vedanta group," Miladi said briefly.

A tall Oriental of athletic build and haughty carriage was the conspicuous figure of the group. A dull red robe, bound at the waist with a cord and tassel, reached almost to his feet, which seemed to be incased in sandals. On his head was a high turban of brilliant yellow. And all about him, with the mincing gait of chickens, walked nine women, young and old, principally the latter. One held a sunshade over his head, while

two others by his side waved palm-leaf fans. On they came to some bars. Radbourne's eyes opened with amazement as two of the women hurried forward to let them down for the Swami, and put them in place when he had passed.

The Swami did not seem to regard their attentions as unusual. He placidly continued his discourse to the party.

"No, you of America know little of cooking."

"But you will teach us, dear Swami?" a gray-haired woman pleaded.

"I shall try," he answered. "But you Americans learn things not readily."

"Think of that," Radbourne said, when he recovered from his surprise. "A lot of decently bred American women leaving, ten to one, their hard-working husbands to a life of discomfort during the summer, while they come here and run after an East Indian, wait on him like a valet. And he tells them how to cook! The Swamis are wealthy, I suppose. Otherwise, they couldn't afford to come over here and convert us."

"They haven't a nickel," Miladi said calmly. "Not a penny. Their vow forbids the holding of property. But their converts care for them. They live at private houses, travel on limited trains, and are borne on a sea of adulation. They enjoy the luxuries of a millionaire without property cares."

"I wonder," said Radbourne, "if I could be a Swami."

"You're not sufficiently handsome," Miladi laughed. "But come, and I'll see how handsomely you row."

Presently they reached the Inn, perched on a bluff with fields of emerald about it. On the slope to the



river a large lecture tent had been raised. And high above it floated a white banner bearing the message, "Peace."

"It reminds me," Miladi said with a smile, "of a Corelli dedication, 'To those who quarrel in the name of Christ.'"

The clerk proved as affable as Miladi had prophesied. Presently they were afloat.

"You were not boastful," she said approvingly after watching Radbourne pull a few strokes. "I trust myself with you. I've been rather cautious since I went on the river with poor Mr. Smalley a few weeks ago. He rows almost as well as he reasons. After we drifted a half-mile the boat got in an eddy behind a little island and he pulled in a circle until he got seven blisters on one hand. Then, he fell over backwards. We were rescued by an urchin the size of a Brownie."

"I'm not as bad as that," Radbourne said. "Shape the course. I'm out for exercise."

"Very well. I'll take you — or let you take me — to my pet cove. It's beyond the reach of lecture fiends. They fight very shy of the river, though devoted to the theory that only the unchanging laws of destiny can affect them. 'As a man thinketh, so is he,' they reiterate. Wouldn't it be sad to burden a politician with obligation to live all his declared principles?"

"Rather. Newspaper men would be safe. The first rule a reporter receives is an injunction against expressing opinions. He is supposed to entertain no impressions regarding matters coming under his observation. It's rather a staggerer for one who enters the profession with firm intent to mould public opinion. He isn't

allowed to until he reaches the editorial chair."

"And then," she hazarded, "the counting-room gets a hold on him."

"You mean that high-sounding proclamations are sometimes due to twinges of the pocket nerve?"

"Precisely," she said. "A lion's roar may indicate a pin prick."

"I see," Radbourne remarked with irritation. "You are one of those who doubt the honesty of the press."

"Oh, no," Miladi smiled. "I suppose they are honest and dishonest. Like lawyers, and plumbers, and manufacturers. What 'people say' is often nothing but what people say. As the daughter of a public man I know there may be a good deal of smoke without much fire. But let's drop generalities. Tell me about your old home."

"I don't think you'd like Waterwick," Radbourne said as he grounded the boat on the shore of a cove that crept from the river's tide, winding between rows of willows until its glamor abruptly vanished in a stone abutment, over which trains sometimes thundered.

"Is it a small place? Perhaps I know more of such life than you guess. When I was a little girl we lived in a struggling town, which was no more struggling than the Governor. He was at the foot of the legal ladder then, and had to go away to climb. Won't you tell me something of Waterwick?"

Radbourne did, and told more of himself than he intended. When he recalled how little Miladi had said he berated himself for a garrulous fool. But there came tempering recollection. As they left the shore she had said, with a new touch of intimate sympathy —

"I think you respect yourself, and I shall watch for your success."

There was little conversation on the homeward trip. Radbourne was desperately absorbed in his rowing. And Miladi, trailing her hands in the water, appeared to find sufficient interest in her own thoughts. A boy received the boat, but declined compensation.

"It isn't allowed," he said. "Miss Frye wants everything free."

As they strolled up the long lane from the shore, Radbourne observed the angular figure of Miss Ford. She was practicing the Kneipe cure, with frequent pauses to examine her bare feet for disturbers that would have caused pain to one not "in the thought."

"Let's sit behind this tree until she gains a little," Miladi said, suiting action to the word. "I know she'll give us every point of doctrine discussed this morning, if she has half a chance. She brims with theories, and uses any one as a pail to pour them in."

As the psychic one approached a pair of bars, a load of hay approached the other side and stopped. A bent old farmer with bushy beard climbed slowly down from the rack and entered a shed nearby. The heavy cart-horse, pulling alone in harness, settled forward in its tracks and stood with lowered head in equine meditation.

Miss Ford approached him with an expression of delight. She stroked his face affectionately.

"Oh, you noble creature!" Radbourne heard her coo. "You've got God in you." More ecstatic, but unintelligible, speech followed, until the farmer came slowly back.

"It's Mr. Paul," Miladi explained, with a ripple of

laughter. "And he's dead set against the summer people. If she mentions his driving God, he'll shock her."

"What an intelligent horse you have!" Miss Ford cried, as Paul let down the bars and took up the reins.

"Hey?" he said, with a look of astonishment.

"Why, just think! He stood here all the time you were gone with no halter or weight to keep him."

"He had fifteen hundred of hay," Paul said sardonically, "and the bars were up."

"Yes, and he knew without trying them."

The farmer's face wrinkled with disgust.

"He'd be a damn fool if he didn't," he observed with sarcasm. "He saw bars in a pasture when he wan't more'n two days old. Been niggerin' this mornin'?"

"What?" gasped the scandalized Vedantist.

"A chasin' of the last Swamee? I don't see's he's nothin' but a nigger."

"The Swami is of a family older than any in West-over," Miss Ford declared, as she started hurriedly. "The people here do not understand about him."

"No," said Paul, "we be too old to learn. Be careful of the stuns, miss. Barefoot people are likely to get stun-galls."

The old man chuckled as he clucked to his horse and started down the lane.

"Good morning, Mr. Paul," Miladi called gayly, as he drove past their retreat.

"Mornin', Miss Ogden," he responded with a kindly grin. "Been worshipping' with the saints?"

"Better. I've been out rowing. Don't you think you were a little hard on Miss Ford just now?"

"Sho," said the old man with some embarrassment. "Did you hear? Wall, them people just rile me. Talk about old Bill being like God! They don't have no horse sense. Glad to see you've got a white man with you. Git up, Bill."

"He's one of the kindest old men I ever knew," Miladi said, "but he abhors 'furriners.'"

They dined alone, save for the forgiving Smalley. He extended the olive branch with an invitation to attend a reception in Miss Frye's honor that afternoon.

"It's her fiftieth birthday," he explained, "and we are to commemorate it by special exercises in the open. Quite a programme, I hear."

"You'd better go," Miladi suggested. "I feel like painting this afternoon, and can't be disturbed. When really inspired, I'm always cross to people. You've done nothing to deserve such treatment. So I shall defer your apprenticeship as kit-carrier."

Radbourne did not go to the reception. He passed the afternoon in playing croquet and discussing the "larger life" with an anemic young school teacher from Oshkosh, whose mother had a penchant for Buddhism. He had no glimpse of Miladi until late in the evening, when the effervescent Allen had gone whistling to bed. For a while he sat alone, not frankly recognizing expectation. As he rose impatiently a figure vaguely familiar advanced down the lane. A minute later he knew it was Miladi.

"You walk late," he called from the darkness of his retreat, as she turned the corner of the path into the yard.

"I've been watching the moonlight on the river," she explained. "And you?"

"Listening to Allen."

"And so tired," she said with a little laugh that was one of her charms. "Let the family do something to recompense you. Mrs. Allen leaves a lunch for me at night. An old habit of student days. Won't you share it?"

"I'm awfully obliged," Radbourne said, struggling between hesitation and delight. "But are you sure you won't mind my appetite? It's terrific."

"I'll assume the risk," Miladi said. "You'll probably listen open-mouthed to my conversation. And so I'll get ahead of you in eating."

Afterwards it did not seem to Radbourne that either had monopolized the conversation. Each had an appreciative listener. Twelve slow strokes of the old clock roused them to appreciation of the hour.

"I'm very sorry I kept you so late," he apologized. "Really, I had no idea of the time. You'll excuse me, won't you?"

"With such a compliment no excuse is necessary. You do bestow compliments sometimes, but always unconsciously. Perhaps that is why I like you. Shake hands, and say good night."

"I didn't know —" he began nervously, as he grasped the hand extended.

"No, of course not," she mockingly interrupted. "Keep your energies for the enemy in the morning. Good night."

For several moments Radbourne meditatively watched the spot where she disappeared from view on the stairs. Then he sought his own room.

"I wonder if she really likes me," he said to him-

self. "Sometimes I think she does. And then she seems to make sport of me with the rest of them here. Pshaw, what has the governor's daughter to do with a reporter? I must watch out, or I'll be getting sentimental."

He slept, and through his dreams rose tantalizing glimpses of a mobile face with eyes that changed from mockery to tenderness. He slumbered late next morning and breakfasted alone. The spiritual elect had responded promptly to the bell. And Miladi, the nasal-voiced waitress said, "Wuz down in ther paster."

## CHAPTER X

In days that followed Radbourne saw little of Westover's spiritual zoo. He was Miladi's squire as she painted the luscious countryside. And evenings they canoed on the shining river. Easily they came to a footing of intimate friendship. Whether he hoped for more he never asked himself.

At times she chided him for his glumness and serenely ignored resultant periods of moodiness.

"Do you know," she said once, when he had been unusually brusque, "that sometimes you're so disagreeable you are amusing."

"Perhaps I might make you like me for something else," he replied, flushing, with a tinge of defiance.

"Perhaps you might," she repeated reflectively. "I could tell better after one of Mrs. Allen's excellent dinners. Suppose you collect my goods, and try food for your disposition."

As they entered the dooryard the mail carrier drove by, and with a whoop of warning flung a mail pouch at Radbourne. Miladi received one letter and read it immediately. He wondered if it contained bad news. She seemed preoccupied, and constraint somehow crept into their conversation.

After dinner she withdrew to seclusion on the plea of a headache. It was an afternoon of misery lest he had hopelessly offended her by his rudeness. Tennis, the cheerful conversation of Allen, and other pastimes failed



to cheer. Finally, he tramped along the waterfront for a thoughtful hour.

At supper, Miladi was gracious as usual, and readily accepted a diffidently advanced invitation to canoe.

Day slipped softly into the arms of a midsummer evening. Warm exhalations of earth rose until they softened the light of a moon which blushed redly for some reason undiscovered by mortals. The broad river hurried on to the sea, banding its shores with inky velvet. There was no crowd of revellers. Only here and there a faint rattle of oars, and a note of laughter so distant it had no power to mar the caprice of fancy.

For a time Radbourne paddled silently. Miladi, idly trailing her hand in the phosphorescent wake, also maintained silence. At length he rested, and she casually remarked,

"I'm going home to-morrow."

Again Radbourne bent over his paddle, sharply accelerating their pace.

"Isn't it rather sudden?" he asked in a muffled voice, after an awkward pause.

"Yes, it's due to news in the letter I received to-day."

Again silence. Then Radbourne suddenly sat up with a determined expression.

"There's something I want to say to you —" he began with a slight tremor which somehow crept in, despite his efforts to speak with composure.

"I know," Miladi interrupted, but her voice was very sympathetic. "Don't say it please."

"How do you know?" asked Radbourne, surprise mingling with a feeling of defeat suddenly chilling hope.

"I haven't been through four seasons without learn-

ing to recognize some symptoms. And I like you too well for the little farce of asking you to let me be your sister."

"I see," he said, and added huskily, "Then there isn't any chance."

He bent to his paddle, and the canoe rode softly. Her eyes were fixed meditatively on the soft enigma of the moon.

When at last she spoke it was in question rather than denial, "Isn't there always a chance? What is left with life reduced to ticketed realities? They are for cozy-corner souls."

She read the light in his suddenly lifted eyes. "Then I may—" he began eagerly.

"Yes," she interrupted. "You may. But do you really want to? Don't think me unappreciative, if I tell you that you'll likely forget me. You have known me so short a time!"

"It may be, but I don't feel so now."

With steady strokes he drove the canoe landward, and neither spoke.

Presently she began a soft humming resolved into a setting of Omar's revery, —

"Yet, ah, that Spring should vanish with the Rose!  
That youth's sweet-scented manuscript should close!  
The nightingale that in the branches sang,  
Ah whence, and whither flown again, who knows!"

Few words were exchanged until they reached the Retreat. Then Miladi put out her hand frankly.

"Say good night, and wish me good luck," she commanded. "I leave on the early morning train, and may not see you again."

"Whoever he is, I envy him," Radbourne said roughly. "And you know how much I wish for you. Good night."

He pressed her hand, and turned suddenly away into the darkness. Rebellion against unkind fortune mingled with a dull ache of loneliness in which he felt himself abandoned. After a time, it must have been hours he thought, the fever of unrest abated in physical weariness, and he sought his room.

He undressed and flung himself into bed, with resentment that the night must be sleepless. But youths have loved since man first walked the earth, and loved again. He awoke with a hazy impression of martial music, a moment later identified with efforts of Allen. The land-lord stood outside his door, beating a tattoo with his knuckles and whistling the cavalry call, "I can't get 'em up in the morning."

"What's the matter?" Radbourne inquired sleepily.

"Nothing. Only it's eight o'clock, and I thought I'd give you a chance for breakfast."

"Be with you in a jiffy," Radbourne called.

As he sprang from bed he remembered; in the bright sunshine was a sudden chill. He went through his toilet silently, almost reluctantly. There was no one to anticipate, nothing to look forward to. In silence he descended to the dining-room where Allen awaited him.

"All my spiritual animals have fed," he explained, "and I guess the girls forgot you."

"Much obliged for your trouble," Radbourne said as he broke an egg. His unconcern was elaborate. "Has Miss Ogden breakfasted yet?"

"Yes, and gone bag and baggage. She asked for you before I drove her to the station. I told her you were snoring loud at last accounts. So she laughed, and let it go. Too bad!" He regarded Radbourne jocosely.

"I saw her last night, and knew she was leaving to-day," Radbourne explained, with studied indifference.

"Do you know," Allen chuckled, "that wife and the women round here thought you got too much interested in her? Women are queer when they get beyond the matrimonial hitching-post. They forget how many affairs they had before the right man appeared. I guess you're all right by the way you eat. I pined three days once when a girl dumped me."

"Oh, I guess I'm intact," Radbourne allowed, flushing slightly. To prove it so he ate laboriously all put before him.

The red-headed Jones boy poked his head in at a window and called loudly,

"Come on for a set of tennis. I can trim you this morning."

"I don't believe it," Radbourne answered. "Wait until I get into my clothes and I'll try you."

He rested at noon, comfortably fatigued with a brace of hard won sets. A letter with the *Globe* stamp lay beside his plate at dinner. He recognized Norman's nervous scrawl in the superscription.

"First letter from the office," he mused. "I wonder what's up."

The letter was short and pointed.

Dear Rad—

Sorry to interrupt your holiday, but I think you had better return at once. A New Yorker has taken the reins, and is raising hell from pressroom to the front office. If you want to be counted, you should be on the ground.

Hastily,

NORMAN.

"I find I must return to Fordport to-day," he said to Mrs. Allen a little later.

"I hope nothing here sends you away in a hurry," she remarked with a troubled look.

"No," he explained, thankful for means of escape from impending loneliness. "A change in the management of my paper makes it advisable for me to report at once."

"I was afraid it might be something else. I am real sorry you are going in such a hurry. We've enjoyed you."

"Thanks," Radbourne answered; "I'm sorry to go, too. I wonder if I can be driven over to the thirty-third this afternoon. It gives me time to pack, I think."

"Get ready, and I'll see that Allen takes you to the station in season."

An hour later he was listening to Allen's lament for loss of the "only man" at the house. "The others don't count. They're dressed up ideas."

He derived some consolation, however, from the arrival of an attractive woman on the train that bore Radbourne away.

"Come again, and bring your family," he shouted as a parting salute; "bring all the little ones."

"Such a young looking man to have a family," remarked an elderly lady behind Radbourne, as the train pulled out. He did not hear her. Already Westover was receding before speculation relative to the condition of the *Globe*.

He felt impatient desire to climb again the rather dusty stairs, to hear the smothered click of the linotype, and feel the vibration of rushing presses. He had a mental picture of the reporters' room, with the shirt-sleeve brigade pounding typewriters or lolling in indolent readiness for a call. The last edition was coming from the press as he looked at his watch, and wondered if his substitute had held his own with crafty Littlefield at City Hall. Recently he had been too much occupied with art, personified in Miladi, to read the *Globe* sent him. He was ignorant of recent events in Fordport.

## CHAPTER XI

Early next morning Radbourne climbed to the *Globe* reporters' room. He had slept poorly, and was eager to hear the story of the new régime.

But early as he was, the entire staff seemed there before him. He was a bit bewildered; for new desks and strange faces were scattered among those he knew. The staff seemed restless and watching for something. The cub came hastily forward to greet him.

"I'm jolly glad you're back," he said. "I'll be glad to return to my suburban berth."

"Didn't you get on well at the Hall?" Radbourne asked.

"Not so badly until the ogre appeared. Since then none of us have had a peaceful minute. I want to get where he won't see me often. Each time his lynx-eye lights on you, there is a chilly feeling that he has the axe up his sleeve."

"He doesn't seem popular," Radbourne said amusedly.

"Wait till your turn comes. Then you'll endorse," the boy affirmed. "I'm going now to see if they won't send you back to the Hall to-day, and let me roam the woods."

A bit mystified Radbourne sauntered over to Norman's desk.

"What's the matter with the boys?" he asked.

"A nervous crank. His name's Dexter and he is, or was, the broken-down manager of the *New York News*."

A victim of some dope habit, I think. He mistakenly imagines himself fit for business again, and somehow he jollied the Colonel into selling him half interest in the *Globe*, with control of management through the publishership. He has daily more ideas on policy than an energetic man could execute in a year. And he monkeys with the staff until they are a set of nervous wrecks who won't be worth their salt in a little while. He buzzes about them like a bumble-bee, trying to regulate things he knows nothing about. Change is his passion, and he likes to swing the axe for exercise. You would have been lopped off without a chance to shine before him, if I hadn't extolled your worth. I happen to have his ear at present."

"I wonder if I'll last?" queried Radbourne.

"I guess so, if you're careful. He won't last long physically, for he has already worried himself into a condition requiring constant bracing. Wait for him this morning. He'll want to see you. I told him I thought you would report to-day."

As he turned away Radbourne encountered the office boy's grin of satisfaction.

"It's your turn now," he said. "The new boss sent me to see if you had come. He's in his office."

The "new boss" was in his office and striding nervously back and forth with a steady rapping of his heavy stick. He was a tall and emaciated man, whose head swung from side to side as he walked. A restless face was dominated by little twinkling eyes, shining with eager inquiry and repelling by a mixture of arrogance and cowardice. He was rather gayly dressed, with diamonds in his shirt-front.



"You are Mr. Radbourne," he said, when Radbourne had scarcely entered. "Glad to see you. Mr. Norman spoke to me about you. Think you are the man to carry out my ideas. The *Globe* wants exclusives, must have them. I'm going to bring it up to New York standards. Glad you came back to-day. I wanted to talk City Hall over with you. Tell me when you think of anything good for the paper. One moment. Mr. Lewis," he called as Lewis passed the door. Before Radbourne had recovered from his astonishment, the manager had disappeared.

"That man's a lunatic," he murmured, as he took up his familiar route to City Hall.

Mindful of Norman's advice, he diligently followed the whims of erratic Dexter and devoted leisure hours to the pursuit of exclusives, usually of little value. This fact did not diminish the manager's enthusiasm. As a special mark of favor, Radbourne was deputed to scarify performances of a theatrical manager who had disagreed with Dexter on a question of press courtesies. The manager was the Colonel's bosom friend, and disturbing possibilities in the event of Dexter's retirement occurred to Radbourne. He obeyed orders, however, so faithfully that the owners of the *Globe* had a stormy interview. Afterwards Dexter took Radbourne to share a bottle of wine.

"We'll show them a few tricks," the manager said with a twirl of his stick. "Stick to me, and I'll look after you."

Radbourne received the assurance with an indefinite impression of its value. He knew he was in favor through the influence of Norman, who alone had Dex-

ter's full confidence. Lewis the manager contemptuously designated as a "fat incubus." Norman found it hard to keep himself from the managing editor's chair.

"I would be foolish to take it," he told Radbourne, "even if I wanted to. For Dexter is sure to collapse before long. Then the Colonel will be on deck again. Lewis is strong with him. If I took his place, it would mean ejection in short order. We mustn't antagonize the old régime, if we want to stay."

Dexter soon abdicated, but not in the way Norman anticipated.

"He's going," he said to Radbourne one morning in November, "but leaves an agent. This morning he appeared at the office with a very smooth looking chap, and they went to the Colonel's private office for an hour. Then Dexter came to me, and announced that his health obliged him to rest for a few months in the South. 'Too much hard work and plum pudding,' was the way he put it. He said he needed to go earlier, but didn't feel like leaving the paper unguarded. Don't smile. Now he has induced a New York friend named Nowell to become acting publisher during his absence, with full authority. He got hysterically enthusiastic about Nowell. Said he was one of New York's most successful advertising men. Also that he had sacrificed financially to save him from death by overwork. Can you fancy any one loving Dexter so much? We'll watch the new star with interest."

"I only hope he isn't a maniac on flabby exclusives," said Radbourne. "I've got two scoops, a secret engagement and a whist party, this week. Littlefield asked

me if I was trying to enter the family of some City Hall official."

"I hope he won't insist on making me editor," Norman remarked. "I've held back so hard against Dexter that the skin is worn in spots."

Late that afternoon they were given a chance to estimate the rising sun. They were leaving the office for a stroll before dinner when Dexter rushed into the editorial room, closely followed by a stranger.

"Glad to find you," he said, with a flourish of his stick. "Mr. Norman and Mr. Radbourne, Mr. Nowell. Only two men on the paper. You can depend on them. Nowell is the best newspaper man in New York. He's going to do for the *Globe* what I would do if my d—d stomach was healthy. Ain't you, Joe?"

"I guess we can turn a few tricks," his friend responded, with a laugh. "Give me a chance to shake hands with them. Glad to know you, boys. I want you to be friendly with me. We must work together to boom the paper. From what Harry says the rest of the crew doesn't count much. He says the editor has a fatty growth at the roots of his hair. Wasn't that it, Harry?"

"He's got something not brains there," Dexter rejoined excitedly. "I'd have fired him weeks ago if Norman hadn't foolishly refused his place. You must make him sensible."

Dexter ceased abruptly and began to pound a chair while Nowell laughed. Radbourne observed him covertly with conflicting impressions. He was a man in middle life with a good figure and an air of confidence. Handsome in a dashing style, he had brilliant

blue eyes, restless and magnetic. He radiated energy in voice and manner. Radbourne's first feeling was one of distrust, tempered by respect for evident ability. Norman watched the new manager in his impassive way, saying little and blowing wreaths of smoke.

"Cool down, Harry," Nowell said presently. "If you don't, you won't be able to eat dinner to-night. Won't Mr. Norman and Mr. Radbourne dine with me at my hotel? I'd like to get in touch with the editorial department at once, since you are going South in a few days."

"Yes, yes," Dexter assented hastily. "Of course they will. Must go, or wife will come after me. She keeps me alive to be a hungry dyspeptic. Good night."

With a final flourish he banged the office door and was gone.

"Looks as if you were ordered to dine with me," Nowell said with a laugh. "Forget that, and do it as a great favor to me. Will you?"

"We shall be pleased to," Norman responded.

"Thank you," with visible pleasure. "It's after six now, and we'd better start for the hotel. I'm at the Congress. By the way, Mr. Radbourne, aren't you the author of that roast of the Harris theater in to-night's issue?"

"Yes," Radbourne admitted with some confusion.

"It's a beautiful piece of work. Let me congratulate you. I have failed to see a better in New York this season. Dexter told me about the difficulty, and his position is quite right. We want to make them come to us. It's business, and we must play the game. I'll install you as dramatic critic next week. Then I want

to talk to you about a plan to fatten that class of advertising."

"Thank you," said Radbourne, relieved. The New York style of rushing at a point rather confused him.

Nowell was an admirable host, though he drank what Radbourne considered an amazing quantity of wine, and urged his guests to keep pace with him. Norman yielded with eagerness which astonished the younger man. Later he learned to know the Virginian's weakness.

Nowell talked cleverly. He knew interesting things about politics, the stage, the financial world, and the newspaper world in particular. He expounded striking ideas for building up a newspaper property, and deferentially sought his guests' point of view on various points. Only once did he refer to Dexter.

"Don't judge the fellow as the man you see now," he requested, "though I doubt if he will ever be much better. He was one of the keenest men I ever met. He collapsed from overwork after undermining his system with stimulants. I advised him not to enter business again. But when he got stuck down here, and said I'd have to take his place to save his life, I gave up some promising plans and came. I have to make peace with Mrs. Nowell. She thinks civilization abides only in New York."

It was late when they left the Congress, for Nowell insisted that they go to his rooms after dinner and smoke. For a time they walked in silence neither Norman nor Radbourne found uncomfortable. Then Norman said abruptly:

"I was an ass to take so much wine. It's too agreeable to me, Radbourne. I haven't had a drink before

in six months. I think he's a corker. He'll make the *Globe* hum."

"Yes," Radbourne replied. No further remark was offered until they paused opposite Norman's hotel and exchanged good nights. Radbourne took an extended stroll before heading homeward. He was unused to liquor, and the wine he had drunk made things seem unnaturally large and humorous. He went to sleep with a vague impression that he was about to be made a managing editor.

## CHAPTER XII

The *Globe* staff awaited Dexter's departure with ill concealed glee.

"Maybe we won't have to keep our grip packed and money for a railroad ticket always in the locker," one reporter remarked cheerfully.

Still, Nowell exacted more than Dexter from them. While Dexter hampered with elusive theories, usually impossible to apply, Nowell held his men down to definite tasks involving long hard hours. But he allowed no one to work harder or longer hours than himself. Every department of the *Globe* felt the impetus of his enthusiasm. On busiest days he liked to lunch in his office. With such an example of application the staff could not murmur. Rather they felt pride in being part of machinery rapidly pushing the *Globe* to first place among Fordport papers.

Sole dissenter to the chorus of cheer was Lewis. The big, good-natured editor was ignored by Nowell, as he had been ignored by Dexter. Both apparently regarded him as the Colonel's personal representative, and thus inimical to the new régime. By numerous slights, in which Norman strove to bear no part, Nowell tried to freeze the editor out. But he placidly continued to draw salary for an editorship shorn of power.

One afternoon, a few weeks after Nowell assumed the reins of government, he called Norman into his private office and said carelessly,—

"Please get up the editorial for to-morrow, will you?"

"It's Lewis's work, and I don't want to crowd him," Norman remonstrated. "If I have exercised any of his authority, it was not by wish of mine."

"You needn't be punctilious any longer," Nowell continued. "In the language of the poet, 'He is no more.'"

"What's happened?"

"Execution. With the full approval of Harry, I asked for his resignation to-day. He refused, and made some reference to an agreement between Harry and the Colonel, stipulating his retention. I didn't care about that. I just told him his place was vacant, and would be filled by a new man to-morrow. I prefer it should be you."

"If a new man is to come, I suppose I may as well take it," Norman said. "But I want Radbourne to take charge of the city news. Though he hasn't been in Fordport very long, he's learned its makeup and knows what I want."

"You can have him, or any other reasonable thing you want. Now I can open up some schemes I had to keep bottled so long as Lewis was editor. It's a clean sweep now, and all credit gained by the paper will be ours."

"But I haven't enough experience to fit me for the city editorship. And I don't understand writing heads," Radbourne declared, when Norman informed him of his promotion.

"That needn't bother you. I'll get a man to break you in on heads, and I'll help you to get the knack of tracking assignments. You must take the place and do



your prettiest. The opening for you was my principal reason for accepting Lewis's place. If he ever gets back through the Colonel, we'll be shipped, though we had nothing to do with his ejection. It's natural for a man to imagine things in his position."

Norman's surmise was correct. When he met Lewis on the street next day, he got only a brusque nod of recognition. And he heard Littlefield gleefully informing a friend that there was a ruction in the *Globe* office, with a flattering picture of Nowell as a "swell-headed New Yorker" and himself as a "second rate tramp editor." He drew a glowing picture of pride before a fall.

Littlefield's opinion roughly echoed the prevailing sentiment in Fordport newspaper circles. The publishers were governed by old-fashioned journalistic standards, maintained by common consent. They keenly resented Nowell's frankly expressed intention of giving them instruction in modern methods. Apprehension gave their strictures on "fake journalism" added acidity.

Nowell disregarded their clamor. He began his circulation campaign by establishing early suburban editions, which soon gave the *Globe* largely increased circulation in the outskirts. Other Fordport papers had talked about such a step for years, and halted there.

Next the new publisher began a voting contest, an old ruse used by every paper in the city and condemned by every other manager as wornout. Nowell judiciously distributed liberal premiums among school teachers, mail carriers, patrolmen, and other classes in intimate touch with the public; and he picked up a few likely candidates secretly boomed by large purchases of coupons. Their support crystallized, a little judicious jockeying in the

news columns resulted in a red-hot battle of ballots, with all the steam of a municipal campaign. When it was over, a million votes had been cast, with the *Globe's* circulation proudly in advance of any other Fordport daily. This fact Nowell did not forget to publish in black-face statistics.

All prepared the way for his grand *coup*, a radical change and enlargement of his paper. It appeared with a goodly assortment of departments, like those of metropolitan journals. From a southern sanatorium Dexter occasionally wired a frantic protest against extravagance. Nowell only laughed and answered with statements of increased circulation and advertising. He personally undertook to increase the *Globe's* advertising patronage, and succeeded to an extent which drew from other managers reluctant admission that he was a "smart rooster." There was magnetism and compelling force in his address. He seemed to sweep whatever he sought into his net.

"He's a wonder," Norman said to Radbourne, with one of his characteristic little chuckles. "When I see him back a poor victim into a corner and hold out to him an advertising contract and fountain pen, I know it's all over except the transfer of a check. That never fails, either."

"We're on top of the heap now, that's certain," Radbourne said, reflectively. "But do you think it will last? Is our boom well founded?"

"I don't see why the advantage can't be maintained, if the Colonel and Dexter will only keep their hands off. Nowell has the city at his feet now. Even the other papers concede that he is the cleverest advertising mana-

ger Fordport has ever seen. The only likely stumbling blocks I see are the owners and Nowell's wife."

Mrs. Nowell had recently come to Fordport to "help James make the paper," she informed Norman and Radbourne, the only *Globe* employees who frequented the Nowell apartments. She was a dark little woman, with an artificial bloom and tastes far too Bohemian for Fordport society. Norman, who mingled general reverence for womanhood with a rather brutal estimate of certain types, regarded her as a "dope fiend." Radbourne had no opinion on that score, but wondered at tireless repetition in her tales of New York, where people "knew how to live."

Under Norman's coaching Radbourne had done well with the city editorship; so well that older members of the staff, at first a bit resentful of his promotion over their heads, acknowledged he had the right stuff, and heartily seconded his efforts to put the *Globe* first in the news field, as it already was in other respects. In politics he displayed a quick grasp of events. Party leaders gave him unusual confidence for his years, though none guessed how few they were. One gray-haired politician amused him by referring to a political matter of a time when Radbourne was in the cradle, adding,—

"We remember how things went then. The youngsters only get them by hearsay."

"They wouldn't respect my twenty-two years, if I had the fabled wisdom of Solomon," he concluded. "So I won't confess. Evidently my face is good for more."

The *Globe* prospered until its rival owners' unexpected return. On the same day they arrived from southern resorts, like birds of ill omen. The Colonel came to back

Lewis, his deposed editor, and Dexter because of a vague impression that the paper must have suffered through his absence. Their joint visit was a disastrous coincidence.

"I would take pleasure in snapping my fingers at the Colonel's demand for Lewis's return," Nowell said with a frown. "And I can dispose of Harry's brash ideas. But when they get together like a pair of gamecocks, I see trouble for us all. They are both pig-headed and hot-tempered. A deadlock will mean that one must retire. If Harry had any sand, he could keep his whip-hand. But in his present condition he's a coward. I may be able to brace him. I'm not confident, though."

For a fortnight the owners quarrelled and fenced for position. Lawyers appeared for numerous conferences, and the staff followed the battle from afar with diligence detrimental to discharge of duty. Nowell was constantly harassed by the rivals, and loaded with instructions by each. Under the circumstances, he swore much and did little.

Dexter took the world into his confidence. All who cared to listen learned he was continually shaking wads of bills, denominations in the thousands, in the Colonel's face. He utterly lost his appetite and self-control, and sometimes upbraided Nowell as a traitor to his interests. The Colonel, a little man with a passion for power, refused to sell his interest in the paper and declared he would ask for a receiver. If he could not have the paper, he said, no one else should. He was much richer than Dexter, and could better afford a costly victory. Spurred on by Nowell, Dexter laughed at the threat until one day the Colonel showed him a petition for receiver-

ship, properly drawn by his attorney and attested for filing. Then Dexter suddenly wilted. Within an hour he transferred his interest to the Colonel, receiving a handsome bonus on his investment. Before the day was done, he left Fordport, giving instructions for disposal of his household goods. The city knew him no more.

"We're done for, boys," Nowell gloomily told Norman and Radbourne that night. "Harry played us a dirty trick, and one I didn't think he could be made to do. After I sacrificed my personal interests to come here, and antagonized the Colonel to advance his plans, he threw up the sponge and ran away without even saying good-by. He just abandons us, for you're substantially in my position, at the mercy of the tiger."

"Seen the Colonel since Waterloo?" Norman inquired.

"Yes, I met him in the hall not long after Harry's downfall. And he had the pleasure of requesting me to reserve space on the first page to-morrow for an announcement that Mr. Dexter is no longer connected with the *Globe*."

"Did he seem grouchy?"

"That's the thing I can't fathom. He was as smug as a chipmunk, and acted as though not an atom of unpleasantness entered into the change. He casually remarked in parting that he would like to have us come to his office at ten o'clock to-morrow morning. Radbourne isn't in it. He'll probably be slid out with a blue envelope. It looks as though he wants to arraign us as criminals, and toy with the axe. I'm half-inclined towards the idea that it would be politic for us to mail our resignations to-night, and take away his opportunity. What do you think?"

"I think," Norman said, "that it would look like cowardice. We have made the paper what it is. In view of this fact, dismissal without cause can't damage us. We three should act together,— stay or go."

"Very well," Nowell laughed. "It won't be half so bad as matrimony, anyway. Radbourne has to agree. He's got no option."

"I climbed with you," Radbourne said, "and your treatment is good enough for me."

Next morning Nowell and Norman sought the Colonel at the appointed hour. He was busily engaged with his secretary, but dismissed her as they entered.

"Good morning, gentlemen," he remarked affably. "Be seated, please."

"Good morning," his callers rejoined in unison as they took possession of chairs. Then came a rather awkward silence. Nowell chewed his stick, and the Colonel twirled his glasses frantically. He was a very nervous man.

"I suppose you know why I asked you to come this morning," he said, clearing his throat vigorously.

"We thought so," Norman answered noncommittally.

The Colonel looked surprised, and went on:

"As I told Mr. Nowell yesterday, Mr. Dexter is no longer connected with the *Globe*. I am the sole owner. In the disagreeable incidents preceding this satisfactory adjustment of difficulties you were an active partisan for Dexter, Mr. Nowell."

Nowell instinctively assumed a defiant air, and waited for the blow to fall.

"That," the Colonel resumed, "was not strange in view of the circumstances by which you came to the

paper. Despite these personal differences, I must acknowledge that in a short period you have strengthened the *Globe* by methods I would have opposed as impolitic in Fordport. I sent to inquire if you care for a contract as business and advertising manager of the paper. I guarantee you a free hand in your department."

Nowell struggled a moment with surprise, then replied with an assumption of indifference:

"I cannot consider your offer unless Mr. Norman is retained. Our relations make this necessary."

"I had thought of that," said the Colonel hastily, "and there need be no trouble on that account. You know I have not recognized the dismissal of Mr. Lewis, contrary to an agreement between Mr. Dexter and myself. I pledged him my support, and feel bound to return him to the editorship. But Mr. Norman can resume the city editorship with no reduction in salary."

"I don't think I can accept," Norman replied reflectively. "Though I did not seek the managing editorship, I happen to know that Mr. Lewis resented my acceptance. Under the circumstances it wouldn't be pleasant to work under him."

"You needn't," affirmed the Colonel. "I know the truth of what you say and propose to make you quite independent of him, though, of course, I expect you to cooperate for the good of the paper. It may be expressly understood that annoyance of the other on the part of either will lead to my request for his resignation. Will this be satisfactory?"

"It might. But what is to be done with Radbourne, who would be displaced by my resumption of the city editorship?"

"He can have his former beat at City Hall. He was fairly satisfied with it, I think, and did good work there. Is there any further obstacle to acceptance of my proposition?"

"Only possibly your contract with Mr. Nowell," Norman said. "I will leave you to discuss that and go back to work."

"It's all right," Nowell gayly remarked, as he walked into the editorial room an hour later. "I've a two years' contract with more stipulations than declarations of principles in a political platform. It isn't glorious to be saved by the enemy, but it's better than a rout. Come on, you two, and dine with me."



## CHAPTER XIII

The new order was speedily inaugurated with the *Globe*, and it worked well. Radbourne was not unhappy among his old friends at City Hall. And Norman handled the city staff with efficiency rivalled by no city editor in Fordport, the *Globe* reporters declared. Lewis was too contented with the triumph of his return to harass them, though an occasional incident betrayed his resentment.

The Colonel, who had neglected large business interests during his struggle with Dexter, now concentrated on tangles in his affairs. He gave Nowell a free hand. Thus encouraged, he threw himself into a new campaign with all his former enthusiasm. The *Globe* again showed the way to other Fordport papers.

With the dispositions of persons most concerned, this agreeable situation could not last long. The Colonel put his business in order and resumed his nagging interest in the paper. Lewis had been trained to endure urgent supervision. He would meekly send his editorial proof to the Colonel's office, where leaders were hacked and edited, or thrown out entirely. The staff considered this more humiliating in view of the fact that the Colonel's secretary, a young woman of the class styled "capable," was suspected of doing revising.

Nowell was not humble, however, and contended for the last letter of contract conditions the Colonel was at

times bent on ignoring. They differed radically in their ideas of the propriety and impropriety of certain classes of news. Nowell had boomed the *Globe* by flaring headlines, sketchy pictures, with personal comments frequently disagreeable to persons mentioned, and concentration on sports. The Colonel accepted the fruits of this policy, but thought the paper could now maintain its prestige with a more conservative attitude. He fidgetted at the mention of "yellow journalism" and fancied that congressional reports, chronicles of the "W. C. T. U.," and stories of old men and houses delighted the public. His idea of personal mention was a record of visits paid by his friends, and a column of births, deaths and marriages. The two systems could not harmonize, but Nowell resolutely held his course until a violent quarrel with the Colonel over the use of a story involving domestic difficulties of one of his friends. The aggrieved party sought satisfaction, and the Colonel enraged Nowell by printing halting apology for a statement the truth of which was not impeached. Then the manager relaxed all efforts, save those required by routine duty.

In the editorial department Norman and Radbourne were having trouble, too. Lewis was accustomed to his place again, and varied his old pastime of smoking and cutting paper by annoying them in covert ways not covered by the Colonel's mandate of neutrality. Norman was beyond his reach, save in the hindrance of complete lack of cooperation. But Radbourne felt his hostile interest in disagreeable assignments, and prompt rebuke for trifling errors the managing editor could not have known except by special effort on his part. And he found that courtesies obtained by members of the staff

through the editor were usually out of his reach. But with Norman's encouragement he grimly attacked whatever work was allotted, and kept an eye out for anything involving danger of rebuke. It was galling, though, and when Lewis sent a cub reporter to secure a City Hall item within the scope of his ordinary duties, he decided to resign.

"It's no use for me to stay here longer," he told Norman. "Lewis is only waiting for a chance to throw me out. Meantime he manages to make me uncomfortable in a lot of sneaking ways. Sending that cub into my beat to-day without a word of warning was an insult. Every man on the staff knows I've got more out of that territory than any other reporter in the city — not a scoop on me in three months. The other fellows at the Hall are beginning to appreciate the situation. I had to take a deal of jolly about the infant's coming down to assist me. Littlefield hinted again to-day that I could find a place with the *Times*, and I've a mind to work that string. You're all right for a while. Lewis can't touch you."

"Stay where you are for the present," Norman said. "In a short time you may be able to resign with satisfaction, and not be alone. I wish I could explain my reason for asking you to stay. But at present I'm unable to do it on account of a promise. Will you hang on a little longer as a favor to me?"

"If you put it that way, I suppose I will. But it's enough to give a fellow the jumps to feel that an official executioner is camping on his trail."

Radbourne renewed his vigilance, and so, he felt, did Lewis. Before long the editor showed his inclination in

an apparent opening presented by Radbourne's report of legal proceedings between two theatrical managers. Recognizing the complicated nature of cross-actions, he constructed his report with special care, and read it in the still damp paper with a feeling that he had concisely covered essential points. Astonishment, not consternation, was his feeling when chance directed his attention to a conversation carried on by Lewis from a telephone near his desk. The name of one of the managers and the word "hearing" fixed his interest in what Lewis was saying.

The editor was evidently excited, and talked in tones unnecessarily loud.

"Yes, yes," he was assuring some one, "it is most inexcusable. What do you want us to do?"

An indistinct jumble which sounded like profanity was returned. Then Lewis asked,

"Do you want me to discharge the responsible party?"

After more mumbling, he hung up the receiver and came hastily to Radbourne's desk. Restrained satisfaction was evident in his manner.

"In spite of recent warnings about your carelessness you've got us into a mess, Radbourne," he said brusquely, regardless of several interested auditors.

"May I ask what it is?" Radbourne inquired, with coolness manifestly irritating to the editor.

"You ought to know. You've bulled the story of that theatrical hearing, and Rich is very much put out about misstatements regarding his side. He threatens to exact apology, and I don't know whether I ought to discharge you."

"What's the error in my report?" asked Radbourne, ignoring the editor's threat.

"I don't remember now," Lewis hesitated, "but it doesn't matter so long as it exists."

"I think my version of the hearing is correct, and I should like to know to what part Rich objects."

"I'll find out," Lewis said, as he again turned to the 'phone with a copy of the last edition in his hand. Radbourne followed and stood beside him when he called up the theatrical manager and began a second conversation.

"What part of the report is wrong?" he asked. "Oh, yes, I see. And what ought it to be? All right, we'll do what we can for you."

When he turned toward Radbourne his embarrassment was evident.

"You have found the mistake?" Radbourne inquired.

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"It's in the head. At first I understood him to say the fault lay in the story. He didn't know enough to distinguish between them."

"Perhaps he never took a course in newspaper anatomy," observed the reporter.

Lewis did not reply, but turned abruptly and switched to Norman the attack begun on Radbourne. Some one was responsible for the error.

He began in the formal manner he had adopted for the city editor since his late return:

"Mr. Norman, I must call your attention to an error in your heading of the theatrical hearing to-day, one which has greatly incensed Manager Rich. It is very

annoying, for he threatens to sue us unless we make humble retraction and explanation."

"Let me see it, please," Norman requested. He did not seem perturbed, as he examined the offending article thrust into his hand. He handed it back with the remark:

"I didn't write that head."

"Perhaps I did," Lewis gasped with astonishment.

"Maybe," the city editor assented.

"What did you write for it then?" Lewis asked with growing irony. He felt sure he had the root of the matter, and that Norman was seeking to evade responsibility.

Norman took a bundle of slips from his desk and presently handed one to his questioner.

"Since errors became frequent where none formerly existed," he said, "I have secured daily proofs of heads. What you have is the proof in question. It differs by a single word from the published head. That alteration changes its significance."

"How could it happen?" Lewis asked confusedly, crumpling the proof and feeling for his scissors by force of habit.

"I suppose it was the foreman," Norman remarked meditatively. The foreman of the composing-room was a relative of Lewis, a fact he had not forgotten to display since friction in the office began.

"It has occurred several times lately," Norman resumed. "The foreman and the new makeup man are equally competent — incompetent, I should say — and seem to have difficulty in putting the pages together. I think the foreman makes up most of the paper and when the arrangement of a head bothers him he digs out enough

to suit his convenience. Quite like a Virginia weekly."

"Why didn't you speak to me about it?" Lewis demanded.

Norman reflectively surrounded his desk light with wreaths of smoke.

"Well," he said, "I ventured to remonstrate with the foreman once and he said something about being a cousin of yours. So I let the matter rest until something serious came up. I didn't like to disturb the family arrangement so unusual on papers. As unusual as it is beautiful."

"We'll right the matter at once," Lewis asserted, as he strode away. His office door closed with a bang and a moment later the furious clatter of his typewriter came through the transom.

"He'll work off a little surplus flesh, now," Radbourne whispered gleefully. "You led him into a trap."

"It was a little consolation, just a little. And I think the incident will assure our comfort for the few days we remain."

"What's that?" asked Radbourne. "Only a few days ago you asked me to hold on. Now you're the one who talks of clearing out."

"You remember I told you we might go together before long. I think the opportunity is near at hand. Come to Nowell's rooms after dinner, and the matter will be explained to you. Can you do it?"

"Surely. Any port in a time of storm."

For the rest of the day he busily reviewed Norman's hint, but failed to think of a solution, until he recollected Nowell's mention a few weeks before, of a special advertising plan by which he was confident a good sum might be made. He concluded the manager had decided to

undertake the venture with their assistance, and immediately decided, if such was the case, he could not accept the proposition. After all, newspaper work was newspaper work, and if he had any regard for his job he should stick to it.

It was past the appointed hour when Radbourne knocked at the door of Nowell's reception room. Norman was there, and as he entered the two men paused in a toast with glasses raised to their lips.

"Just in time to drink to our success," Nowell remarked as he filled another glass. "You nearly missed the first round."

"Perhaps before I drink I may inquire what the venture is," Radbourne said.

"To be sure. I'll break it suddenly, and we'll discuss it later. It's a paper."

The toast was drunk in silence. Then Radbourne queried with unconcealed eagerness:

"What paper?"

"Daily evening."

"Who backs it?"

"We do."

"Have you inherited a fortune?" Radbourne asked in surprise.

"From somewhat luxurious habits I have wrested ten thousand dollars. Norman can raise five thousand from some land he has at home. And you?"

"Me? I've got a few thousand," Radbourne said. "The last failure with a daily paper in Fordport, and the third in ten years, was Cable's. He lost \$250,000 in two years, and went broke. What warrant have we for attempting to turn the trick with our resources?"



Nowell brought his fist down heavily.

"Our ability," he said, "our ability to give the people, the same people at heart that you find in New York or any other center, a paper they really want in a field now occupied by a chorus of old-fashioned sheets."

"Are you sure you really understand Fordport?" Radbourne inquired. "I haven't been here longer than you two, but I'm a native of this state, and fancy I have a fair knowledge of its character. Fordport is a rich, conservative old city with a paucity of business and a multiplicity of tradition. Its standards are not the same as New York's. Undoubtedly it contains a considerable element which would support a spicy daily. But before you can command it you must spend a lot of money to convince the mob it wants your goods, and that you can satisfy it better than other vendors of news.

"Meanwhile, you will have the bitter opposition of every other daily in the city, morning or evening, and all their financial backing. This latter element means the heaviest financial forces in Fordport. The *Globe* is held by the Colonel for the benefit of political friends, a gas company, and several other corporations in which he has shares. The *Times* is owned by street railway interests. And the *Courier* is a pseudo-Democratic sheet emasculated by two banks. Into these combinations enters half the city's wealth, mobilized by men who would not hesitate to use any means to crush a paper likely to threaten their pet schemes. How do you estimate the situation?"

"I'll tell you how," Nowell said vehemently. During Radbourne's statement of obstacles to his plan he had excitedly paced the room, biting his nails, as he frequently

did when agitated. Norman sat calmly in an arm chair, sipping his wine and puffing appreciatively his cigar.

"I'll tell you," Nowell resumed. "Your statement suggests my point. The Fordport papers are run on antique lines by a few, for the benefit of a few. The people patronize them because it's Hobson's choice. But I am convinced they would flock to a paper which took a stand for public interests. The fellows who failed to establish papers here in recent years, so far as I can learn, were ignorant of the business. Young Cable was an unsophisticated boy, bled by a gang of leeches he employed. But Norman thoroughly understands the editorial branch. And I think my work on the *Globe* demonstrated I am no amateur in the business office."

"You've hypnotized the city," Radbourne acknowledged with a laugh.

"That's right, and I can do more for myself than I accomplished with two top-heavy superiors clogging every step. With enough money to float us six months, I'm dead sure. And Norman agrees with me that I can make a new daily a winner and push it ahead of any paper in the state."

"Where's the money for six months?" asked Radbourne.

"I have some backing," Nowell explained with slight hesitation. "I've considered this step for several months and investigated all discoverable leads. I think I have a promising prospect. In recent years Fordport has gone no license, chiefly through its sanctified press, controlled by men with private wine cellars. In consequence New York brewers and wine merchants have lost valuable trade here. I am convinced they would liberally con-

tribute to the support of a paper working for license in the next campaign. That would help us at the start, and keep us afloat until we got to be self-supporting."

"But I thought you contemplated a paper with no string, one consecrated to the people."

"Damnation!" Nowell exploded. "I said so, and I meant it. Anyway, license is for the people. They want it."

"What's your opinion?" Radbourne inquired of Norman. "You don't appear to overflow with eloquence."

"Oh, I've made up my mind; I canvassed the situation with Nowell, and concluded there is a field for a new paper, breezy and independent. The necessary exception for the brewers can be quietly handled to save us any discredit. We had you down to-night to see if you care to join us. We three have been together, and ought to continue so, it seems. How do you lean?"

"Well," Radbourne said thoughtfully, after a brief pause, "you have given me a heavy question for offhand decision. But I have enough confidence to cast my lot with you in the thing, if you are ready to risk it."

"Good," Nowell declared enthusiastically. "I didn't think you would be stupid about it. Here's to the Fordport *Evening Record*. May she live long and prosper."

"Your plans must be well matured, if you've already hit upon a name," Radbourne said in astonishment.

"Expenses of equipment, weekly labor and supplies are figured out, my boy. We'll be ready soon to cut loose from the *Globe*. I can tell when as soon as I interview a few local men who will probably lend a helping hand with stock. One more drink to our success, and then we separate. It's about time for the wife to arrive. I

sent her off to a whist party to-night to keep her from suspecting what's in the wind. She's going home for a visit next week, and then I'll have a chance to work unhindered."

"Is your courage really good for the plunge?" Radbourne asked Norman, as they strolled homeward.

"With proper management the *Record* ought to coin money," Norman said, deliberately.

"All right. You're both older and more experienced in newspaper work. I'll take my chances with you."

## CHAPTER XIV

For a few weeks after their conference the three promoters worked under a heavy strain. Norman and Radbourne applied themselves with redoubled zeal to the *Globe's* interests. Nowell's time was mainly occupied by his new project. He gave little attention to his office and took pains to antagonize the Colonel in various ways.

"I must drive him to a breach of contract," he cheerily explained to Norman, after a quarrel over a minor question of policy in which he stubbornly refused to yield. "I think it will come soon, for he hinted to-day that he had heard of my having interests outside the *Globe*."

The presumption was correct. Next day a grinning office boy handed Nowell an envelope with instructions considerably abridging his authority.

"It's a clear infringement of the contract," he said, after examining the document. "I'm free to leave now."

For several days Norman and Radbourne saw little of him. But one afternoon he approached the city editor's desk with a jaunty air.

"It's time to cut loose," he said.

"How's money?" asked Norman.

"Easy. I've milked the local interests for twenty thousand, enough with what we have to give the paper a comfortable start. The New York brewers will probably subscribe liberally. It's June now, and I want to have the *Record* in shape before the fall advertising begins. There's no time to spare, so I think we ought to

send in our resignations at once. Are you ready to quit?"

"Certainly. I'll see Radbourne. We'll have to give them two weeks' notice, I suppose. Decency demands it."

So it happened that the office boy was entrusted that night with three envelopes for the Colonel.

"There'll be no action until the Colonel gets back," Nowell said with a chuckle. "He left town yesterday. By this time he has a telegram asking him to return."

Two days they quietly continued their work. On the third the Colonel arrived. Radbourne saw him as he entered his office, grip in hand.

"The Colonel's here," he informed Norman. "I just saw him in the hall. I'm going to clear up my desk, for we won't be needed here much longer."

An hour later the Colonel's secretary, an angular young woman of solemn mien, impressively deposited blue envelopes on their desks. Those belonging to Norman and Radbourne briefly informed them that their resignations were accepted, and arrangements for filling their places made. They were invited to call at the business office, and draw salary for the period required as notice for departure.

Nowell read his twice with an expression of mingled amusement and vexation.

"The Colonel's trying to get back at me," he said as he tossed the letter to Norman. "Read it."

It was very brief:

"Your resignation is declined. For reasons requiring no explanation, you are hereby dismissed

from your position as advertising and business manager of the *Globe*. A fortnight's salary will be paid you at the business office. Please remove your personal effects as soon as possible, and do not come to this office in the future."

"Looks like a roast, doesn't it?" Nowell inquired.

"A little brash. You accept it, I suppose."

"Accept it! Of course I do. Anyway to get free from the contract. I've been worried for fear he would become diplomatic and hold me in jeopardy of a suit for violation. Now that he's taken the initiative, I'm free to do as I like. Let's pack."

In short order the trio were ready for final departure. The staff gave them cordial, though quiet, wishes for success. They had been liberal and popular in their time of power.

"We may have room for some of you fellows when the *Record* is under way," Nowell said gaily. "We want the best men in town on it."

"Three Little Lambs just out for play," hummed Radbourne as they walked towards Nowell's hotel.

"Three little orphans rather," Norman suggested.

"It's up to us to secure a home as soon as possible," said Nowell. "To-morrow we must see a lawyer and form a corporation. A stock company is the thing, since we want to interest other people, as many as possible so long as we retain control."

"Where do you go for legal advice?" inquired Radbourne.

"Shearer of Smith and Smith. Bob Yardsley recom-

mended him as a man who knows corporation law. He does business for him."

"Do you mean Yardsley, the son of old Yardsley, who made so much money in the liquor business when saloons were wide open?"

"Yes, I want to please him. He's going to take stock, and will persuade others to come in. He's a good fellow, too; twice as big-hearted as a lot of those Puritan aristocrats about town. He's coming to Shearer's office tomorrow to introduce us. You two ought to be there at three in the afternoon. I'll meet you."

That evening Radbourne spent with "Shenandoah," given by a star cast. Next morning he went forth with his tennis racquet, and played a few sets for the first time in a year. It seemed strange, rather depressing, to have no duties demanding his attention. Vague doubts of the wisdom of the step he was about to take persisted.

At three o'clock he reached Shearer's office. The rest of the party were waiting. He was introduced to Shearer, a little man with a large, very bald head and ferret-like eyes. He met Yardsley, too, and was rather favorably impressed. Yardsley was tall and rawboned, with irregular features, and an air at once hesitant and humorous. His opinions, when he gave any, were usually qualified endorsement. He seemed diffident.

The business-like Shearer lost no time in approaching the subject of conference. He asked for a skeleton of their desires, plans and resources. By common consent Nowell was deputed to give needful information. He launched at once into a glowing account of the *Record's* possibilities, illustrating by the newspaper situation exist-



ing in Fordport. Shearer listened attentively, and drummed on his teeth with a pencil.

"Any plans beside the publication of a daily newspaper?" he presently inquired, abruptly closing a picturesque period.

"No," said Nowell.

"Make it the general publication articles of incorporation, Henry," Shearer said to his clerk. "That will cover all necessities."

"How much capital stock?"

"We had thought of \$100,000," Nowell explained, "but no amount has been agreed upon."

"Make it \$250,000. It is better to have enough capitalization to cover all possible sales of stock. Much easier than amending the articles later."

"But we want to control the company," Nowell interjected. "We ought to, in order to carry out our plans."

"How much stock will be subscribed at the start?" asked Shearer.

"About \$35,000, including ours. We thought you could arrange to give us some stock for promoting. Doesn't the law allow it?"

"Yes, we'll arrange that for you. You, Mr. Nowell, can purchase the paper's equipment as an individual and sell it to the company for such a block of stock as the directors deem suitable compensation. It should be enough, with what you pay for in cash, to control the first issue of stock. Suppose we make that \$50,000, giving the directors authority to increase it to a sum not exceeding \$100,000. Say \$30,000 for you three. Does that suit?"

"Yes, I guess that will be right," Nowell said with a look of relief.

"Now for the officers," Shearer said briskly.

"What officers?" Nowell inquired blankly.

"Why, the Record Publishing Company, of course."

"But we're not incorporated yet!"

"You will be in a few days, and I like to get things into shape. Haven't you discussed the matter of officers to be elected?"

"A little. We rather agreed that Norman should be president, Radbourne secretary, and I treasurer; the three to go on the board of directors."

"Good," Shearer rubbed his hands and looked pleased.

"You have memoranda of the points, Henry?"

"Yes, sir," the clerk responded.

"You may go, then. Forward the application at once to the secretary of state, draw up articles of association and prepare minutes of incorporators' first meeting, with election of officers as suggested.

"Come back in three days," Shearer continued, when Henry had gone, "and I'll turn a corporation in working order over to you. You will only have to go through a brief form of election under my direction; a half hour will suffice."

Shearer was as good as his word. On the appointed day he subjected them to a series of questions which seemed much like cross-examination, turned several volumes over to Radbourne, and informed them they were qualified to do business. Nowell, Norman, and Radbourne had agreed to divide their \$30,000 stock in respective shares of six, four and three.

The next question was several of quarters for busi-

ness. This was left to Norman. After several days of janitor interviewing he narrowed possibilities to three locations, and called a council to decide their choice. Two, excellent for publishing, were on unimportant side streets. The third included the street floor and basement in one of the city's leading business blocks.

Nowell at once inclined towards the pretentious stand.

"This is the one we need," he said. "It's better than the offices of any other paper in town."

"Costs \$10,000 a year and neither of the others is more than five," Norman explained.

"Can't help it," Nowell reiterated emphatically. "This is the place we need. We largely rely at first on general belief in our resources. That will establish our credit. Such a place as this, fitted up in good style, will be worth more to us than \$100,000 in the bank. We must put our best foot forward. Don't you agree with me?"

"Well," Radbourne said, "you're the one on whom the brunt of raising money must fall. So I suppose you ought to have your way in such things. I prefer this to a poorer place, of course, and am willing to take it, if you want it."

It was arranged that Nowell as treasurer of the *Record* company should take a lease. In the windows presently appeared large signs announcing:

"These premises will be occupied, on or about July 22, by the Fordport *Daily Record*. Watch for it."

The old Fordport papers signified that they were watchful by slurring announcements. The *Globe* intimated there was no capital behind the proposed daily, and the *Times* reprinted the history of unsuccessful at-

tempts to establish papers in the city. The *Globe* also ran in black face a conspicuous notice stating, "J. N. Nowell is no longer connected with the *Globe*."

Nowell retaliated by inserting in each daily a large advertisement reminding the public of his connection with the new paper, and his previous service on the *Globe*.

The temperance wing took alarm, having somehow heard of the *Record's* affiliations, and endeavored to kill its chances by circulating a report that it was to be a liquor organ. One enthusiastic, but indiscreet, clergyman ventured in an out of town address to state that it would be controlled by saloon interests. This gave Norman an opening as editor of the new daily. In a curt note he informed the reverend gentleman that only prompt and unqualified retraction would save him from a suit for slander. A humble apology speedily received was published as an advertisement in the *Globe*. This checked public criticism, and left a composite mass of conjecture to which the promotors did not object. It kept the *Record* before the public.

Meanwhile Nowell was lavishly equipping the plant — on credit. When mechanics had thoroughly remodelled the offices, decorators took possession and furnished them in a style which made Fordport gasp with amazement. Plate glass windows, carpets, handsome paintings, and minor furnishings usually found in homes of the wealthy, were considered wildly extravagant in a newspaper office. They were, for the *Record*.

Public estimates of the *Record* Company's wealth steadily increased as the plant grew.

"There must be a pile of money behind your concern," an inquisitive advertising solicitor on the *Times* remarked

one day, as he stood in the doorway and critically surveyed the counting-room.

"All we'll need, I guess," Nowell assented carelessly.

"I heard," the solicitor continued, "that the New York brewers banked \$100,000 for you on the day you incorporated."

"Well, you can hear almost anything," Nowell said noncommittally. "Did you deposit that New York check for \$10,000 this morning, Radbourne?"

"No," Radbourne answered, responsive to a wink.

The visitor's mouth opened a trifle wider.

"Perhaps when you are started, there may be a vacancy in the advertising department?" he said insinuatingly.

"Perhaps. I'll see about it when the time comes," Nowell assented. "Wouldn't he be anxious to come if he knew just how well heeled we are?" he continued when the man had gone. "If he did know, he wouldn't walk by the door for fear the *Times* might suspect his loyalty. These quarters are doing their work. I heard to-day that Hearst was really at the bottom of our venture. And yesterday that a clique of wealthy business men, dissatisfied with their treatment by existing papers, were financing us. But they all have our pockets lined with gold. Their lowest estimate is \$100,000 in the locker. It ought to help me sell stock. I must go to New York next week. I have a bundle of introductions that will do business for me."

"How much do you expect?" Radbourne inquired.

"Can't tell, but I ought to get twenty thousand this trip. I'm going on as soon as possible, for we don't want to delay the first issue."

Two days later he took the company's stock book with a supply of certificates signed in blank, and departed. Norman and Radbourne were left to superintend mechanics, send out preliminary announcements to business houses, work up an exchange list, and attend to other details incident to establishment of a daily paper. Nowell promised to write them often regarding his progress. A week passed with no letter from him.

On the eighth day Nowell appeared at the office as Radbourne prepared to close for the night. He was dusty and somewhat drooping. An incipient beard marred the usual florid smoothness of his cheek; and his eyes looked tired.

"Come back like Bobby Shaftoe, with pockets full of gold?" Radbourne queried as he dropped into a chair, and ran his fingers through his hair.

"No," he said shortly.

"Luck wasn't up to expectations?"

"No."

"How much short of your twenty limit are you?"

Radbourne pursued, surprised at such taciturnity in his usually loquacious associate.

"About half," Nowell said sourly.

"What was the matter?"

"Hogs!" the manager said abruptly, with a resounding thump on his desk. "Hogs from A to Z. These fellows in Fordport don't know the New York lay, or they bluffed me. Their letters of introduction didn't help a penny's worth. The New Yorkers seemed blind to Fordport, except that they remembered it as a place where they dumped money in bygone days, with no intention of spending more. When I talked the good of

the cause in my best style, and I'm no slouch at persuading, they spoke of dividends and the *Record's* insecurity. It was pretty much the same all along the line. Last night I had some luck. I hooked an old fellow for five thousand. I'd have been ashamed to come back without that."

"What is your next play?" Radbourne inquired. He felt the situation demanded immediate solution.

"I go out to-morrow in an active canvass for advertising. I think I can get enough to make the *Record* a success without help from any one. We've launched this thing, and now we must see it through."

"What causes such a doleful strain?" asked Norman, who had arrived in time to hear Nowell's closing sentence. "Didn't you take all the spare coin from the New York brewers?"

"I took little except a poor opinion of them," Nowell replied. Then he repeated his story.

Norman listened gravely.

"We'll have to work the local end for all it's worth," he said. "I'm sorry it must fall mainly to you. But Radbourne and I will do what we can."

"Oh, we'll be all right," asserted Nowell, with a flash of customary energy. "All I need is a shave. Come up to my rooms."

There he seemed completely to recover his normal cheer. A résumé of recent vaudeville bills indicated that in New York his hours had not been entirely given over to business and melancholy. Next day he began his canvass of business houses for advertising space with even more than his usual energy. For he was determined to demonstrate that his success on the *Globe* had

not been due to its prestige. He would not be denied. The list of advertisers for the initial issue swelled slowly, until it included a majority of the city's representative business firms.

"I rest," he said one hot July afternoon. "We're full to the chin for the first issue. I think I'll have to cut out some ads."

"How does it figure?" asked Norman.

"About forty-five columns, and we're only running ten pages. That's as much as we can stand on the break. I don't want the people to get a first impression that the *Record* is only a dry goods handbill. That's what I made of the *Globe*. Lord, but I put dollars in the Colonel's pocket. With his paper in the shape it was a year ago, it would be easy for us. I'm not afraid, though, and I'll tackle some long term contracts for space at once. How are you making it with the editorial end?"

"All fixed. Radbourne will have to be with us a deal in the business end, so I have a fellow named Goodwin for city editor. He hails from Cincinnati, and is recommended as a lively, experienced chap. His wife comes, too, labelled an 'experienced newspaper woman.' Radbourne is to look after City Hall and the theaters. And I have young Perry of the *Globe*, with two youngsters, Copeland and Keay, to cover minor routes. A youngish woman named Blish will do society gush and club notes. It's rather a small staff to oppose our particular rival the *Globe*. They have largely increased their force this week, and I see a brace in the paper. Still, only a limited number of men can be well handled in the field. I'm willing to cross swords with them."

"They're on the run," Nowell remarked. "Fright-



ened at the prospect of putting a paper thirty years old against a new sheet with three comparative paupers to push it. They don't know that part, though. If they did, we wouldn't be able to start the wheels. I heard to-day from a girl in the *Globe* office that the Colonel gives us a month of life. He shows his confidence by increasing the salaries of all employees suspected of negotiating with us. Some of the boys who called long and vainly for a raise came to me in conspicuous places for social chat; and Saturday brought more money for each of them. They couldn't tempt Sammy, the office boy, though. He sent in a letter of resignation — think of it — and refused to stay with an increase of two a week. It's all on account of you, Norman. To-day he told me he preferred you to Lewis. I asked him why and he said because he did. Unanswerable reason."

"They intend to crush us at the start, if they can," Norman said. "I suppose you heard about the drop in price they contemplate."

Nowell's chair tilted forward with a bang.

"Drop, no," he said. "What is it?"

"I was told to-day the *Globe* has sent out notices to all local newsdealers, informing them that after Saturday of the present week the price of the paper will be reduced from two cents to a penny. Of course this is to forestall us in the penny field."

"It's a public confession of weakness," Nowell reflected. "But it's bad for us. A monopoly in the penny field I counted on as a strong card. Who told you?"

"A man who got it from Parkerson. He handles their Sunday edition. So I guess the story is authentic. We'll have to watch out for Parkerson. He's tricky,

and has a sizeable pull through handling the New York papers. Copeland got on to the fact that he has been trying to round up as many newsboys as possible on a promise not to sell the *Record*."

"The Colonel is getting at me personally," Nowell burst out, with something of a snarl in his voice. "Yesterday I went to see two men about buying stock. I heard through friends of theirs that they were favorably disposed towards the paper, and would probably take a few shares. But I found them icy. Finally one admitted that a man he trusted had advised him our company was only a wildcat scheme. His adviser was one of the Colonel's lieutenants, who attends to jobs the Colonel is too squeamish to undertake. They have picked away at my character a good deal, and let you and Radbourne severely alone. I am the mark. Say, Norman, how do you think the general public feels towards us? You know its pulse better than I do."

"A paper never started with brighter prospects in public regard. The city is ripe for an independent paper, a champion of popular rights, and that will give the news without fear or favor. They look for us to fill the place and stand ready to support us. If we had the means to make us independent of advertising for a year, I would guarantee to get a circulation that no advertiser could disregard."

"There's another chance," Nowell said. "By being a free lance politically we may command a market price for support. The city is fairly close."

"I don't like that sort of thing," Norman said abruptly. "Perhaps we were indiscreet in launching the paper on the strength of promised support, rather

than checks for stock. But I don't care to make my début with a collar."

"I didn't mean that," said Nowell hastily. "Keep your shirt on. You and Radbourne are too touchy. Just trust me a little, and I'll find the money," with a thump of his stick. "I'm damned if we don't win out, too. Let's go in and look at the composing-room. I sent Ward, the foreman, in to-day with a crew to set up advance matter. We ought to get out a paper next week. Come inspect the plant."

The composing-room was spacious, well lighted and well equipped. With the typesetting machines, whose manufacturers had yielded to Nowell's wiles, there was an abundance of fresh type.

"This will be a winner with the public," Nowell said as he carelessly fingered a pile of open face. "Every paper in town is sticking to antique type, and no one can help seeing how much handsomer this is?"

"See its effect on my first editorial," suggested Norman as he handed him a proof sheet. "I just had it set up."

"It's great, positively great. And it has just the right ring of independence about it. Just as independent as though"—they were descending the stairs to the press-room and out of the hearing of compositors—"as though we had no strings attached to us."

"I give you warning," Norman declared, "that I won't suffer interference from any crowd."

"Oh, don't cross a bridge until you come to it. Let's get Jack to start the press. I think it's in running order. Hullo, Jack! Can you start her now?"

"I think so," a voice replied from beneath the shining

monster. It was presently followed by a dirty man, his face masked by dirt and grease.

"Ain't she a beauty?" he inquired with pride, "Weighs twenty tons and works like a sewing-machine. All the latest wrinkles in folding and cutting."

"Got your paper all right?" Nowell inquired.

"Yes, but old Chisholm is a suspicious duck. He wanted to know all about the company. But when I told him it had \$100,000 in the bank, he pulled in his horns. He wouldn't trust the Recording Angel for paper. And all the time he's leaking texts from the Scriptures."

"Put on a roll and let's see how she runs," the manager said with a laugh.

The pressman called his assistant to aid him, and Nowell continued in a lower tone:

"We must keep on the right side of Chisholm. He's the only large paper dealer in the city. Lack of confidence on his part would be mighty uncomfortable. I'll have to see him, and boom our credit."

The roll was speedily adjusted on the press and Jack took his stand by the electric motor. As he pushed back the lever the rollers began their first journey with a stiff creaking, then quickened to swift easy motion. Faster and faster the blank papers poured through the press as Jack threw the speed controller back.

"How much is she doing?" Radbourne asked, when the big machine was pounding with a dull steady roar.

"About 20,000 an hour," Jack yelled with his eye on the indicator, and then shut off the current.

"Good enough," Nowell said approvingly, when he

could make himself heard. "Have her in shape for business on Monday."

"We ought to lay out the paper," Norman suggested as they mounted the stairs.

"That's work for you two leading men," Radbourne remarked. "I think I'll go to the ball-grounds. Save good space for my dramatic department and I won't kick."

## CHAPTER XV

The day of publication came, and the inevitable confusion incident to starting a daily. Nowell sent his mechanical force scurrying hither and thither. He watched the makeup impatiently, and finally rolled up his sleeves and took his stand at a case, bitten with fear lest the edition be late in going to press. So he frequently interviewed the advertising foreman, looked at his watch as each page went down to the stereotype room, and generally decreased the efficiency of Ward's force. The foreman made allowances for the manager's nervousness, and urged his men on.

In the editorial department Norman was directing affairs as serenely as though his throne were years rather than hours old. A railroad wreck disastrous to life and property had occurred that morning in a section of the state uncovered by the news service he was forced to use, since other Fordport papers had exercised their veto privilege to keep the *Record* out of the Associated Press. But he established connection with a local reporter near the accident, and felt confident his special would beat the regular dispatches. A prominent statesman and equally prominent musician had died, somewhat inconveniently for the *Record*, too new to have a supply of ready-made obituaries with which established journals await the demise of the great. A reporter had collected the necessary data from a library, however, and

local news was going well. Radbourne had unearthed a scandal in the purchasing division of the fire department, and was confident it would be a beat. A young scapegrace's elopement with a servant girl, which other local papers had probably agreed to suppress, made a good second for a local scare, and small bits of varied description were sufficiently numerous to assure a well-balanced edition. Norman's editorial matter was in type. He felt secure when Nowell, perspiring and bedecked with printer's ink, rushed into his office.

"Well," he said nervously, "how far are you behind?"

"Not any."

"You're lucky. I'm having the devil's own time to keep the composing room up to schedule. How do you manage it?"

"Well, Goodwin seems to be quite a star with the staff. He has a voice like a Bowery bouncer, and the youngsters jump at his first word. Then Radbourne and Copeland are thoroughly acquainted with the most important beats, and I have good stories on a "Q. and L." wreck and young Brown's elopement with a maid."

"Great! Didn't Brown's family ask to have the story about him killed?"

"Yes. His father called me up and said offhand, as if he were ordering a roast for dinner, that they didn't care to have anything about it in the papers, adding that the other papers promised to be mum. I told him we couldn't enter the agreement, since we intended to use all news fit to print, regardless of involved parties' social standing. Then he informed me that our dirty sheet would be speedily wiped out, and introduced

some fine specimen of profanity, interrupted by central's breaking the connection."

Nowell slapped his knee with glee.

"That's one on the Colonel," he said. "Brown is his brother-in-law. He is also president of a bank and vice-president and director of some more. Another weighty enemy for the *Record*. If we can get the public coming our way, I'll teach lessons to a few of these self-anointed saints."

Norman's face flushed.

"I didn't intend refusal as a personal affront," he said with evident irritation. "I don't believe in allowing spite to creep into a paper. But so far as stories like the Brown affair are concerned, suppression is useless. The local papers are made to look like monkeys. Local correspondents of New York sheets feed them substantial reports, and Fordport papers are scooped in their own field."

"I hope you aren't going to be chicken-hearted," Nowell observed, as he turned to go. "I believe in returning shot when I have the ammunition handy, and we'll have to scrap for our lives in this campaign. If the *Globe* people put me on the toaster, I'm disposed to give them some of their own medicine."

The hands of the office clock pointed to three when the last page was placed on the press. The pressman switched on power in the presence of most of the *Record* staff and a band of enthusiastic newsboys, held in place by zealous Sammy.

It started slowly and the first paper, on which the headline "*Fordport Daily Record*" stood out in moist blackness, had almost reached the basket when a sudden



snapping caused the pressman to shut off power.

"Broke the web," he explained as he clambered with his assistant to the top of the machine, and began threading the paper anew. His task completed he re-started the press. Again the web succumbed to the strain. Several times this process was repeated. The newsboys began loudly to manifest their displeasure:

"Git a sewin' machine! Der's udder papys ter sell! Can't wait all night!" and other observations were freely offered.

"It's some of Chisholm's dirty work," the presman scowled. "He gave us a lot of rotten paper. You've got to keep an eye on him, or he'll do you every time."

Later his remarks were confined to lurid curses when the press, a beautiful trial performer, seemed to develop other disabilities.

Nowell held the newsboys through a generous supply of sandwiches and coffee, in which they made amazing inroads.

"Dese people is all right," one boy gurgled. "Don't git nothin' like dis off der *Globe*."

But the edition was complete at last, though it was five o'clock before the press ceased to turn. The papers were rather blurry and in spots too much ink was present conspicuously.

"It won't hurt if the first few editions are a little off color in appearance," Nowell said, "though I wish we had the press in good working order. Twenty thousand circulation the first day looks as though the public was interested in us. If we can hold a half of this the *Record's* way is easy."

In a few days the mechanical department was sys-

tematized, so they were able to approximate the proper hour of going to press. And the paper presented a clean, neat appearance. Style it certainly had, and the staring headlines introduced by Nowell were taken up by the *Globe*. Lewis evinced no reluctance to follow the example of the *Record* when it seemed politic to do so.

Norman was soon aware that in some way the *Globe* editor obtained knowledge of his plans, despite precautions. Arrangements for a suburban edition in adjoining territory were forestalled by the *Globe*, and other annoying checks inflicted. These things were less mysterious when three employees of the *Record* were found to be spies in the pay of the *Globe*.

On the street Nowell met the influence of the *Globe* frequently, and began to entertain respect for the Colonel's fighting qualities. Rumors of the *Record's* financial resources were succeeded by inquiries regarding its bank account, a difficult question. Most of the comparatively small amount of cash on hand Nowell had deemed it advisable to keep in the company's safe.

"They're running us hard," he said to Radbourne. "And by plugging my character in certain quarters they have hurt our prospect for disposing of stock. Why, they don't stop short of bigamy in their lies."

"Well, why don't you nail them?" asked Radbourne.

"How can I?" impatiently. "They come to me indirectly, and one needs definite proof to charge a man with such an offence. But our situation requires immediate action. Weekly expenses are nearly four thousand and can't be cut much without sacrificing quality in the paper. We have ten thousand on hand and weekly

receipts not exceeding two thousand. There'll be advertising coming in, of course, on the first of the month. But it won't meet the necessary outlay. If we can hold on until the fall advertising begins in September, danger will be past. While our advertising columns look heavy now, they are padded. I had to do it to get the business, and was forced to cut rates; so there isn't much profit. The *Globe* has reduced its rates, too, and some merchants who promised me space are placing it there instead."

"But you've had more money than the amount you said would make us safe," Radbourne suggested.

Nowell frowned and bit his nails.

"I know that. But expenses are heavier than I expected. And people we owe for parts of the plant are hungry. Every local creditor seems afraid he'll be done out of his money. The *Globe* people have filled them with predictions of our ruin. Rogers, the builder, came to me yesterday for a thousand we owe him, and said he would give me a week to pay; not a day more. I know he has been tampered with, for only last week he was tickled with five hundred on account. And Chisholm is a regular Shylock. I ordered two tons of paper from him this morning, and received a call instead of the goods. He had nerve enough to ask me where we banked. The upshot of the conference was his demand that we pay his bill weekly. We'll have to do it, too. No other dealer here has the goods we want. That means four hundred a week. And the press association has submitted its ultimatum of a weekly payment, or discontinuance of wire service."

"Looks bad, doesn't it?" Radbourne said slowly. He

was surprised by Nowell's disclosures. While he knew conditions were disagreeable, he had not suspected imminent danger of shipwreck.

"Yes, it's damned bad," the manager agreed. They smoked silently for a few minutes. Then Nowell resumed jerkily,

"What do you think we'd better do?"

"I don't know, I'm sure. I fail to see an anchor at present."

"I don't suppose you could raise any money?" Nowell said with some hesitation.

"You know I put in all I had when we organized. It wasn't much, but it represented my pile."

"Yes, I know that," Nowell interrupted hastily. "But I thought may be you could raise some from your friends. Through being on the street you've gained a wider acquaintance than Norman and I. And then your immaculate character is good currency with the white-washed Pharisees who hold all the money in this city. What do you say?"

"I can't do that," Radbourne promptly replied. "At least not at this stage of the game. I won't try that except as a last resort."

"Well, that settles it, I suppose," Nowell said with a slight sneer. "You'll be lucky if you've never borrowed when you reach my age. What will we do, then, to stave off trouble? I haven't any moneyed friends besides the rummies, and Norman is equally destitute."

"Call up Yardsley and get his opinion on the feasibility of tapping his crowd. He's a good sort of a fellow, with a lot of influence among them. Perhaps he'll help out."

"Maybe. Do you mind going round to bring him here? He still keeps his place open, though it's a dry year."

"I guess my reputation will stand it," Radbourne said ironically. "Wait here, and I'll produce him soon."

He found Yardsley in an upper story den, and had difficulty in reaching him. Several sentinels guarding locked doors seemed to distrust the friendliness of his purpose. Yardsley had no intention of being involved personally, if officers happened to call for contraband supplies.

He was playing poker with a trio of his associates when Radbourne entered.

"Hullo!" he called with a friendly grin. "Come and have a hand."

"Sorry, but I can't now," Radbourne said. "Will you give me a minute of your time?"

"Sure." He led the way to a corner, and anxiously inquired: "What's the matter? Are they going to raid me?"

"Oh, no! Nowell wants to see you. Can you come now? It's a matter of some importance."

"I'll go with you right away. Boys," he called to the players, "amuse yourselves. You know where supplies are. I'm going out for a while. Come on, Radbourne."

For a block they walked in silence. Then Yardsley asked,

"What's the row about?"

"Money. I'll explain the situation to you."

When he had finished Yardsley's face wore a look of surprise.

"Why, I thought everything was working well," he said. "Nowell told me that less than the amount he secured would put him on easy street."

"So I thought, too," Radbourne replied. "He miscalculated expenses. It's costing us more than we anticipated."

"What's he want?" asked Yardsley. "He knows I'm in as much as I can afford."

"He thought you might do something for us with the License Club. They have money in the treasury to be spent for the good of the cause. And we have worked for you in a quiet way. Do you think you could get us some money?"

"Maybe, but the last two or three years have flattened our pocketbook. It's been all the time a chase to keep out of jail. Some of the boys think you don't help us any because you don't slam the 'prohibs' and the officers. It may make them balky about voting you something from the treasury."

"Will you undertake it for us?"

"Yes," Yardsley said as they entered the *Record* office, "I'll do what I can."

Nowell sat in his private office with a bottle of rye in his right hand. It was his usual refuge in times of perplexity, though he boasted that no one ever saw him the worse for it.

"Hullo, Yardsley," he said. "Have something? No. Well, that's how you fellows get rich. I suppose Radbourne has been telling you our sweet, sad story. Hasn't he?"

"Yes. He clean surprised me. I thought it was all right with you."

"It clean surprised me, too. But you must know the whole story, for methodical reasoning is Radbourne's fad and failing. What do you say?"

"I'll help you if I can. Our committee will have to call a meeting of the club, and you'll have to go before them."

"Call the coroner, if you like. When and where will the session be?"

"Perhaps I can get one to-night. I'll just go out and see the executive committee. Then I'll 'phone you."

"All right. We'll wait."

"This means the plunge," Nowell said when Yardsley had gone. "If they give us money, they'll demand a voice in the paper's policy. It is dirty company for men used to associating with gentlemen. But we'll have to stomach it and try to keep them quiet. General knowledge that they have a string on us would keep away some of the merchants I bank on for advertising. Fordport is such a newsy burg. The whole town knows what you have for breakfast."

"I suggested something of the sort, you remember?" Radbourne observed.

"You guessed it, you mean. If things had come out as I planned, no trouble would be afoot now."

"'Of all sad words by tongue or pen' —"

"Oh, cut it short. There's the telephone. Talk poetry to central."

"Yardsley says he has arranged a meeting of the club to-night," Radbourne announced when he hung up the receiver. "Salem street, Number 48, at eight twenty."

"That's the Blake House. Ratty old hole, but I suppose they have to keep their meetings dark to avoid ar-

rest for conspiracy against public morality. Any idea who the club members are, and how many?"

"About a hundred, I think. I only know Yardsley and a few of the leaders."

"And we — that is, I — must go before this gang of toughs and submit a business proposition. Actually lavish logic on them to keep the voice of liberty alive in the *Record*. I can imagine how Norman, stuffy little beggar, will rear when they lay down editorial law for him. He got huffy yesterday because I asked him to investigate a story about an electric road manager who failed to extend us courtesies given the *Globe* and *Times*. You must hunt him up, and have him present at the proper hour. I suspect he's wandered off to see a girl he has a suspicious interest in. Why can't you fellows be warned by me? Crinoline and castastrophe are synonymous."

"If you fail in the newspaper business, you can sell patent medicines," Radbourne suggested.

"Don't be sarcastic," Nowell said with a laugh. "Good-by till we meet at the Blake. I won't come to the office this afternoon. Rye and I must prepare the funeral oration."

It was eight thirty when Radbourne reached the Blake, quite breathless with haste. He made his way through a knot of tobacco-wreathed loungers to the greasy desk. A clerk who looked like a broken-down middleweight stood with arms akimbo.

"Is Bob Yardsley here?" Radbourne inquired.

"Don't know," the clerk answered with a hostile look.

"I'd like to see him."



"What do you want?" the clerk demanded, with a lowering of his chin.

"The meeting of the club, of course. I'm Radbourne of the *Record*. Here's my card."

"All right." The clerk was suddenly civil. "Yardsley and your fly manager left word for you to come in. This way."

"This way" was up a flight of stairs, down two, and through several dark holes, each provided with a guard. Finally, his guide knocked twice on the wall and a section rolled back. He hastily pushed Radbourne through the aperture and closed the opening.

Radbourne involuntarily closed his eyes in a blaze of light. The first face he recognized was the cheerful visage of Yardsley, who stood near the door in conversation with Nowell.

"Hullo!" he said with a powerful handshake. "You're a bit late. We began to think the meeting must open without you."

"And no other person present sufficiently immaculate to offer prayer," remarked Nowell sarcastically, "unless it's Norman. He has a clerical air befitting a solemn occasion."

"You don't need any assistance in producing a worldly air," Norman calmly retorted from his seat in a corner. "What do you think of them?" he asked Radbourne a moment later, with an inclusive gesture for their hosts.

"They look rather tough. I don't envy Nowell his task of reasoning with them. We ought to provide him with an X-ray machine."

It was true members of the License Club did not con-

stitute an elegant social bloom. There were men young and old, tall and short, stout and thin. But there variety ended. Most of them bore the stamp of the barroom habitue. The exceptions were such as Yardsley, passable sporting characters. The hum of conversation was like the angry tone of a beehive, for there was little cheer for the club in its situation.

"It looks as if they intended to hold us for ransom rather than give us a lift," Norman remarked. "Did you bring a revolver?"

"No," Radbourne replied lightly. "I relied on the moral influence of the press."

"Don't talk like that, Radbourne," Norman said with sudden passion. "It's no joke. If I were in this alone, I'd go to the wall before I'd take money from these roughs."

"That seems to be the individual opinion we all hold. But each swallows the poison for the others. I guess it's up to Nowell now. The audience seems to hunger for speech."

A dark squat man was making his way to the corner where Yardsley and Nowell still earnestly conversed.

"The boys want the meeting called to order, so they can hear what the paper fellers offer to do," he said. "They won't loosen any money unless they think it will be well spent."

"Then open the session," Yardsley said. "You're president. Mr. Nowell is ready any time."

Without further ceremony the president lifted a chair and pounded the wall vigorously.

"Shut up, boys!" he yelled. "We're ready for biz. You all know we're here to see if money from the treas-

ury goes to the new paper. Mr. Nowell," grasping unhappy Nowell by his coat, "will tell you why it ought to."

Thus thrust to the fore, Nowell pulled himself together and plunged in boldly. Quickly divining stock compliments would be useless, he substituted "Boys" for the traditional "Gentlemen" of the stump speaker, and took up the *Record's* situation, presenting it with an ingenuity which excited the wonder, if not the approbation, of his partners.

"Now do you see why we believed certain statements later proved to be unfounded?" Radbourne asked Norman, as Nowell came to the end of his argument with enthusiastic review of reasons why the *Record* was vital to interests of the liquor wing.

"I think I do. He could sell snowshoes in Borneo!"

Nowell had seated himself in triumph and sat mopping his face. The club held a whispered conference.

"The boys would like to have you gents leave for a few minutes, while we hold a private meetin'," the president presently announced.

So Nowell, Norman, and Radbourne found themselves waiting in a dark basement while the club debated their claim for aid.

"Did I talk well?" Nowell asked.

"Well enough to melt the heart of a brass monkey," said Radbourne.

"I thought I gave it to them pretty strong," the manager said in a satisfied tone. "I guess my little spiel will be good for a few thousands. But what's all that rumpus about? Let's get near the door, Radbourne, and listen."

They heard the confused clamor of excited voices, finally dying until Yardsley had the floor.

"I tell you, boys," he declared earnestly, "the *Record* has done us a heap of good. We don't want to bat every cold water man between the eyes. That makes no license votes. We want the paper to use arguments, not personalities, and bolster our side for next spring."

"I tell you what I think," a strident voice shouted. "I think when a man fights, he wants to lamn the other fellow hard. The way to lick those white-livered tee-totalers is to give 'em fits. I ain't in favor of giving the *Record* any money unless we can have a hand in its say about no license."

A heavy chorus of approval followed this declaration, and Yardsley apparently yielded.

"Well," he said, "if you fellows feel that way, it settles it. Maybe Mr. Nowell will promise to give us a voice in the policy of the *Record* on the liquor question. I'll ask him."

He came into the basement, closing the door behind him.

"I've done all I can for you," he said awkwardly, "and I think the club will vote you some money. But maybe you won't want it with a string. The majority of the boys think your policy ain't stiff enough on the liquor question, and don't favor voting you anything unless you promise to allow the club some voice in the matter. I told them I'd ask you what you thought of the proposition."

"I don't suppose they'd be unreasonable if we did," hazarded Nowell.

"Probably I could hold them down."

"Tell them we accept."

"I didn't ask you fellows," Nowell said, when Yardsley had gone, "because it's Hobson's choice. We have to take their aid and terms, or suspend."

Neither Norman nor Radbourne answered. There was a moment of awkward silence before the door swung open and Yardsley again appeared.

"Come in," he said.

Further proceedings were brief.

"We understand," the president said, "that you promise to give us a hand in the license fight and hit hard. On this condition we vote you one thousand dollars. Here's the money. The meeting's adjourned."

He thrust the roll of bills into Nowell's hands and turned away. The clubites were already moving towards the door. Evidently they regarded the meeting as closed.

"We went cheap," Radbourne observed, when they emerged from the hotel and were happily separated from their benefactors. "Looks like a slight on your persuasiveness, Nowell."

"I wouldn't have promised them our aid, if I had expected they'd be so niggardly," Nowell said moodily. "Some other way must be found. Yardsley could help us, if he wanted to. He's got a hundred thousand salted away, and intends to keep it there, I guess. Discreet for Yardsley, but awkward for us. I'll try him to-morrow with visions of power through controlling a live paper, when good old license days return. It will appeal to his ambition and his pocketbook, too, I hope."

"Your ideas are copious!" Norman exclaimed in mock

admiration. "You should have been a theosophist, Nowell. You have more visions in a day than Blavatsky mustered in a year."

"Well, I need them. You and Radbourne have the calmness of an ice cake. It's quieting, but not constructive. I'm going to the club for a little game. Either of you feel the need of relaxation after a pleasant interview with the unwashed?"

"I guess I won't go to-night," Radbourne said. "I'm rather tired, and your crowd are a bit swift for me."

"I'm going home to dream of lazy days when Pat Murphy's bartender writes my editorials, and I only have to O. K.," Norman added.

"Very well, children. Good night," Nowell said lightly. "When things look different in the morning, I'll make another effort to retrieve our fortunes. I'll see Yardsley at the club, probably, and arrange for him to call during the forenoon. Might as well strike while the iron's hot."

## CHAPTER XVI

Radbourne was conscious of longing for shelter and distaste for thought. It seemed that clouds settling upon the *Record* wrapped him also. More keenly than Norman, and vastly more than Nowell, he felt personal reputation at stake in the paper. For Fordport was a city of his own state; its people, his own people. Lately he had felt the streets less friendly. Glories of the Fourth Estate were very remote; but he was painfully aware of its thorns.

He listlessly used the latchkey to No. 3, and heavily ascended to his room. With a sigh for the preliminaries to bed he switched on a light over the desk at which, in quiet, he had sometimes toiled at what is called "creative work." In the midst of its bare expanse he saw a letter conspicuously placed. And with it a note from Goodwin saying "Special Delivery" sometimes meant special interest. So he had brought it along on his way up-town. The superscription in a vigorous hand with sharply accented downward stroke was unfamiliar. But as he lifted the envelope to read its postmark a faint perfume brought illumination. It belonged to Miladi. To her alone.

A full minute or more he held the letter unopened. What was the meaning of sudden pain, that feeling of complete loneliness, and apprehension of loss? In the press of material anxiety Westover and its associations had been lost to view. Now suddenly returned, they

lived in a woman's figure. His own words on the river their last night together came back to Radbourne: "Whoever he is, I envy him." Slowly, almost reluctantly, he broke the seal, and read:—

"So you are a publisher, Monsieur. And you didn't let me know. But I have heard something of a very lively paper called the *Fordport Record*. So I learn you are not still sleeping in the Allens' second floor front, as you were the morning I left Westover. Of course, I want to hear what you are doing, and trying to do. I wonder if you are a practical idealist. Please write."

A "practical idealist." One of a trio holding out the hat to brewers and saloon-keepers. Physical repugnance pointed self-accusation. He viewed himself in the mirror, seeking some sign of the spiritually unclean. In a spasm of disgust he seized a pen and wrote:—

"There is little to tell, and even less pleasant to say. I am only the least of a trio apparently driving a poor enterprise onto the rocks. I will spare you unsavory details. But I am grateful"—he hesitated over the word—"for your interest."

When it was sealed he thought it an ungracious response. But regret was silenced as he went forth to a nearby letter-box. When it was done he sought his bed with the feeling of one who has burned his bridges, and turned his back on hope.

Yardsley did call next day, and had a long conference with Nowell. But it was unsatisfactory. He resolutely declined to become the *Record* angel.

"I'd like to back you," he said, when Nowell had finished a glowing statement of benefits that would accrue to him, if he would make himself the people's champion.



"I'd like to put more money in, and I believe what you say about the chance to get it back. But you see my wife would make a row about it. She didn't want me to take any stock at first; and now she keeps asking me to sell it. She's afraid of papers. I haven't a great deal of ready money now, and couldn't raise much without her knowing about it. So I can't stand behind you."

"Another case of a henpecked man," Nowell said contemptuously. "Haven't you got nerve enough, Yardsley, to stand out against a woman, and put her in her place?"

Yardsley's face reddened.

"I'm not finding fault with my wife," he said quietly. "She's interested as much as I am in keeping enough for the kids. I don't think she bullies me. Usually I find her judgment good. In this case I think she's too timid. But we won't argue about it."

"All right. No offence intended," Nowell saw he had made a false move, and diplomatically shelved his request. "If you aren't in shape to handle it, we'll have to find another way out. But there is another matter you might help us on right now. It's about Rogers, the builder."

In a few sentences he sketched the situation about the builder's threat.

"I've reason to believe," he said in conclusion, "that he has been secured against loss by the *Globe* people, who hate you fellows as they hate the *Record*. And he won't hesitate to put the screws on in an effort to ruin us."

"But how can I help you?" Yardsley asked. "I can't pay his bill. I told you that."

"I don't want you to. I want you to help us in a

way that will also secure you against loss of money you have invested in the paper. You have been white with us, and I want you looked after. I want to give you a blanket mortgage on the entire *Record* plant, so any creditor will be prevented from attaching portions of it to satisfy claims."

"But a mortgage means money; and I haven't got it!"

"That can be arranged. Haskell, our lawyer, will fix it up. I sent for him to come in this morning at eleven, hoping you would be willing to do this. He ought to be here now. Let's light up, and wait a bit."

The cigars were scarcely burning before a light rap on the door was followed by Haskell.

"Morning," he said briefly, as he perched on the arm of a chair and reached for the cigar-box. "What's the trouble?"

"Why do you assume there's any trouble?" Nowell fenced.

"Well, lawyers aren't often sent for, and so heartily welcomed without need of a curative process."

"You're a gamey little chap," Nowell continued in bantering fashion.

"Never mind about my size. Legal advice doesn't go by pound weight."

Haskell was a lightweight. He was short and slender to the point of attenuation, and very dapper and alert. A long nose, twisted a trifle, and a wide mouth with frequent flashes of teeth, gave him a belligerent aspect. As he constantly twirled a light cane, he had the cocky air of a terrier. He was regarded as a rising lawyer, though some older attorneys shook their heads dubiously when his name was mentioned.

"You are right, of course, in assuming that I didn't call you from your office for a social chat," Nowell said, coming to business. "You see Rogers, the builder, has threatened to attach us, tie us up, and do all sorts of things, if we don't pay his full claim before one week from yesterday. We could do it. But other creditors will follow suit, if we let him squeeze us. So it occurred to me that we might stave off trouble by giving Yardsley a blanket mortgage on the plant. He doesn't want it, and no money will be passed. In fact, it won't be recorded unless we have reason to believe that trouble is impending. Can you arrange matters to make it tight legally?"

"Nothing easier. How much is the plant worth above present incumbrances, and how much money has Yardsley in here now?"

"The plant has a clean value of about twenty thousand. And Yardsley has a thousand in."

"Make the mortgage for ten thousand. He gives you a certified check; you put it through the bank and return the money to him. Until the mortgage is discharged no creditor can attach and seize any part of the mortgaged goods, without making himself responsible for payment of the mortgage. Make up an approximate list of goods and I'll come over to-morrow to fix things up. I'd better hold it for record until you give the word."

Next day the mortgage was duly executed, and Yardsley became a frequent visitor at the *Record* office. He took an interest in advertising, circulation and expenses. One morning, soon after, he escorted the president of the license club for a call on Nowell.

"We came to get a little help in the line you promised," the president explained.

"Very well. Let me call in Mr. Norman. Editorial and news matters are under his control," Nowell said suavely. "He will help you out."

Secretly he doubted if Norman would acquiesce in the arrangement. He had shown symptoms of dissent from the agreement, and once had the bad taste to speak of resigning in case of outside interference with the paper. Nowell preferred that the emissary should meet him directly.

"This gentleman has a case in which the License Club desires our help," Nowell explained when Norman entered in response to his call.

"Yes," the editor assented as he seated himself, and lighted a cigarette. The president examined his hat, but did not proceed. "What is it?" Norman inquired after a brief silence.

"It's about the sheriff playing favorites in the rum business. He has every member of the club spotted so we can't pull a cork without having a dozen officers after us. But a few fellows outside have laid a pipeline to his office, and do a tidy business without interference. I won't say the sheriff has been fixed. But he ought to know what's going on in his office. Deputy Osborne is the one we want to plug hard."

"Any places where we can get evidence of these transactions?"

"Yes, a dozen!" The visitor reeled off names well known in political and sporting circles.

"All right," said Norman, as he rose to go.

"Will you help us out on it?" the president asked with ill disguised eagerness.

"If we get good proof," was the message that came back through the doorway.

Nonplussed by unexpected docility, Nowell sought Norman's office at the first opportunity.

"What the devil has come over you?" he asked in amazement. "Only yesterday you talked of resigning if any outsider monkeyed with the paper. To-day, you promise support to that red-faced saloon keeper without turning a hair. What has changed your mind?"

"Several things," Norman answered. "Principally a remark of yours yesterday. You said that the *Record* had been too much like other Fordport papers. Hadn't been spicy enough. Now, I'm going to run it wide open for a while, and see the results. In my opinion, it will make our position worse. But you shall have a trial for your theory. If my reporters get anything justifying an attack on the sheriff's office, I shall make it hot to-night."

"I think it's a wise move," Nowell asserted. "It may give us a handle that will force Yardsley and a few of his well-heeled friends to stand behind, after all."

"But what's the end to be? That responsibility is yours. You voluntarily assumed it at the start, and neither Radbourne nor I would be in this thing without your assurance that you could carry it through. What do you really see ahead?"

"I think," said Nowell, and his face hardened, "I think circulation will give us enough advertising, if we can hold out a few months. Otherwise, we must sell."

"Or —?"

"Break."

*Record* reporters did find a few ugly stories about the sheriff's office, not sufficiently strong to justify blunt assertion of crookedness, but enough to make a sensational double-column leader. Uncomfortable questions were asked the sheriff. Ten minutes after the *Record* went to press newsboys began to return for fresh supplies. The sales grew to figures surpassing those of any previous day in the history of the paper. In the clubs, on the streets, in public places of the city, the *Record* editorial was discussed. It reached many first time readers of the paper.

"Keep it up!" Nowell exclaimed enthusiastically the next day. "That editorial was the greatest 'ad' we've had. All the people talked about it, and the liquor crowd was tickled. A little more like that, and I think I could tap them again."

"All right," Norman answered. "On it goes, though I'm ashamed to print such stuff."

In its next issue the *Record* continued its attack on the sheriff, addressing him in an open letter which asked a series of questions regarding the character of his deputies. Again the paper sold like hot cakes. Nowell was elated, and announced his belief that the right chord had been struck at last.

"Do you think we can interest people daily for a year by assaults on the sheriff?" Norman asked.

"Bosh!" Nowell exclaimed impatiently. "You're too much of an old woman. When this is worn out, we'll hunt up a new song. Anyway, we are publicly committed to license. And if we have the reputation,

I propose to secure the perquisites. I'm going to tap again."

He did, with the aid of the faithful Yardsley. They used a day in driving about the city. Nowell returned at night, tired and grumpy.

"How many thousands?" Radbourne queried laconically, after Nowell was seated in his favorite chair, with a bottle of rye at his hand.

"They are narrower than a knife blade. If I hadn't had Yardsley with me, all the fruit would still be on the trees. By osteopathic methods we squeezed out a thousand. But it came hard, with a wailing chorus of poverty all along the line. Now they have us committed to the support of license, they are not so anxious to please us. One ignorant rummy had the impudence to tell me the paper wasn't well run, that it cost too much."

"Then you can't rely on that crowd to help us to prosperity?" Radbourne suggested.

"They're through contributing, I guess. That was what they said."

"What next?"

Nowell frowned nervously.

"For a quizzer, you're the finest specimen I've met," he said irritably. "The bar, some bar, lost an ornament when you entered newspaper work. I don't know what we can do, unless I land advertising enough to attract a buyer. We can't put the paper on its feet without assistance."

"And until a purchaser is found, we live through —?"

"Yardsley, or some other man with money."

## CHAPTER XVII

Nowell's canvass for fresh advertising was not a brilliant success. Men who had almost solicited his attention as manager of the *Globe* repulsed his attempts to secure their patronage by excuses that they never spent money on a new paper; that they had exhausted their annual appropriation for advertising, or other evasions easily penetrated. A few plainly told him that the *Record's* recognized affiliation with liquor interests made its columns valueless to them.

"To think," he stormed, after one afternoon's unsuccessful quest, "that I left an assured place in New York to be kicked in a hole like Fordport. It's my reward for prolonging Dexter's useless life."

At the end of his week's notice Rogers again appeared. He was short and thin, with a mottled yellow moustache and a queer trick of wrinkling his nose in conversation. Without noticing the clerks he silently made his way to Nowell's office and stood at attention.

"How do you do? Glad to see you," the manager said blandly. "Sit down."

Rogers sat, and appeared to think deeply. But he did not vent his thoughts in words.

"Am I right in thinking that you called to give us a card for advertising?" Nowell presently inquired "Or is it purely social?"

The builder's nose wrinkled, and he swallowed desperately several times before he could command his voice.



"I want my thousand," he declared hoarsely.

"Very sorry I can't give it to you to-day. A little short just now. Call again in a few days. Say Friday."

"I'll have it to-day."

"I don't think so."

"Then I'll attach you, and sell you out." As he launched this ultimatum, Rogers produced a receipt book, ready to acknowledge payment.

"Go ahead," Nowell said with a yawn, and turned to his paper.

"Damn you, I will!" Rogers shouted as he rushed from the office. "And before night, too."

Nowell reached hastily for the telephone.

"Give me 313 Main, quick," he called when central responded. After a brief period of suspense he began to nag.

"Shut up, won't you?" came in irritated tones from the other end of the line. "If you want to play in a brass band, practice in the country."

"Is that you, Jim?" Nowell asked eagerly. "I thought they hadn't got you. Rogers called just now to get his money, and when I turned him down, he threatened to attach before night. Hustle the mortgage to the registry. It must be on record before he starts proceedings."

"It shall be done within an hour. As soon as the process is complete, I'll send my clerk down with notice of the fact."

"All right," Nowell hung up the receiver and hurried to the safe. He speedily removed money and papers relating to the company's private business. Then he took

from the cash drawer all except a small amount of change, much to the cashier's surprise. Soon he and Radbourne were seen to proceed in the direction of his hotel, loaded with bulky parcels.

"You act like a man who has been sold out twice," Radbourne said with a laugh. "Quite professional in your style."

"Well, I didn't live in New York for thirty years to be beaten by a Fordport carpenter," Nowell remarked.

On their return they found Haskell's notice that he had obeyed instructions. Nowell's spirits rose perceptibly. He loved excitement, and began to regard threatened proceedings against the paper with almost impersonal interest.

"I'm ready now," he asserted jovially. "Let them come."

Norman was less complacent.

"It's bad business," he said glumly. "If they drop on us with an attachment, it will destroy the last vestige of credit."

"It can't," the manager remarked. "We haven't any. It's a cut-throat game now, and we must rely on our ingenuity to win out."

He had not waited long when a cadaverous individual, tall and seemingly bowed by the weight of a strawberry beard, appeared at the cashier's desk with an inquiry for the manager.

"In there," the cashier remarked, with a wave towards Nowell's open door.

He followed the direction, and confronted the manager at his desk.

"Mr. Nowell?" he inquired with unctuous civility.

"Right. What can I do for you?"

"I am Deputy Osborne and I have a writ of attachment against all *Record* property to satisfy the claim of William Rogers. Do you acknowledge service?"

Nowell regarded him curiously.

"So you're the fellow we plugged as the bribe taker in the sheriff's office?" he said amusedly. "But you don't look like an opulent dispenser of public trust."

"I didn't come here to be insulted. I came here to attach," the officer said angrily.

"Oh, yes. And what will you attach?"

"Everything, press and all. You can't abuse anybody in the *Record* to-night."

"I suppose you know that the *Record* plant is covered by a mortgage?"

"Wha-at?" the officer stammered.

"Yes, and that you are liable to suit for any damage sustained by us through overstepping your bounds of legal authority. Really, you country officers are too careless. You couldn't wear a badge a day in New York."

"I guess I'll consult the lawyer that drew the writ," the deputy said defensively.

"Yes, do. It's Merrill, I see by the paper. I suppose you want that back. Tell him Mr. Haskell acts for me. Haskell and Seely. It's too bad to bother you so much, and confuse you, too. But call again. Good day."

As Osborne blundered out in confusion, Nowell called his office boy.

"Hurry up to Mr. Haskell's office, and tell him I want to see him at once. If he's not there, find him

and give him the message Come back as soon as possible."

Haskell preceded the boy's return.

"Is the battle on?" he inquired briskly. "Who is their lawyer?"

"Merrill. I won the first round."

"Well, I win the second. I'm looking for a chance to take a fall out of Merrill. He needs a jolt to shake his conceit. What's the present status?"

"The sheriff has gone for instructions."

"Guess I'll wait. He will telephone you soon and try to scare you on a bluff. Have a game of pedro?"

"Don't mind," Nowell acquiesced cheerfully.

Without further parley they drew their chairs to a deal table which Nowell dragged from a corner and began their game. They smoked and exchanged jests as though no such paper as the *Record* existed. Presently the telephone rang sharply.

"Let me answer it," Haskell said quickly. "If it's Merrill I want to surprise him. Hullo," he called. "Who is it? Merrill? Well, this is Haskell." He listened to an excited buzzing with a malicious smile. Then resumed, "You want to know about a mortgage. There's a blanket mortgage covering the plant. Who executed it? I did, and it's all straight. You think it's a humbug? All right, go ahead on that assumption, and see where you land."

Again a confused and angry murmur reached Nowell's ears.

"All right," Haskell remarked when it ceased, and he hung up the receiver.

"He says," he explained to Nowell, "that the mort-

gage is a fraud, and that he won't recognize it. On the contrary, he proposes immediately to send an officer with a truck to haul away your office furniture."

"And you said all right. Do you call that getting the best of him?"

"He won't do it," Haskell explained placidly. "Instead he will come down to see if he can frighten us somehow."

"He's got me frightened enough now," Nowell said hastily as he called up Norman and requested his presence at once. "Can you jam in plate and miscellany enough to go to press an hour early to-day?" he inquired when the editor appeared.

"I think so. What's up?"

"Rogers is trying to make trouble, and I want to head off a possible attempt to interrupt the edition to-day. Will you give us a variation on the Sheriff Osborne string?"

"There's a little fresh material I might use."

"Then do it, and make it strong. Give him hell."

"This will please him when he gets back to clean us out," Nowell said to Haskell. "I'll show them they can't frazzle us. But let's resume. It's your deal."

They played steadily until a knock at the door came with Nowell in the act of sweeping in a trick.

"Come in," he called.

The door opened slowly to admit a portly man who stared at them in astonishment. Nowell saw he had a florid complexion, domineering blue eyes, and a blonde moustache, pointed aggressively.

"Howdy do, Merrill," Haskell said without rising.

"Have a hand?"

"I came on business, not to play cards," Merrill said icily.

"Oh, yes. This is Mr. Nowell, the *Record* manager. I guess we three can discuss the business you have in mind."

"Have a chair," Nowell interrupted.

"Thanks," responded the stout man as he heavily sank to rest. Then he thrust his chin forward aggressively, prepared for action. "There's no use in beating about the bush," he said. "I came here to see about that mortgage."

"Why," said Haskell in a tone of surprise, "I thought we discussed that matter over the telephone."

"Do you mean to say," Merrill excitedly demanded, "that the mortgage is bona fide for value received?"

"You forget, perhaps, that you are speaking to a brother attorney," Haskell replied coldly. "I decline to discuss the matter further."

"You remember what I told you when you shut off on the 'phone?"

"You said you intended to send a cart here to take away the office furniture. I said, 'All right.' I say so now. And as Yardsley's attorney I warn you that we will hold you responsible to the extent of the mortgage, \$10,000, for anything you remove, if it's only a chair."

"I've a good mind to attach the press and chain up your edition to-day," Merrill declared angrily.

Nowell smiled faintly at this. His ears, strained to catch a familiar rumbling from the press room, had been rewarded several minutes before. He pressed a button in his desk and sat back quietly.

"You can't do that," Haskell declared positively. "The press belongs to the manufacturers and is virtually only leased to the *Record*."

The office boy unceremoniously opened the door and thrust a bundle of damp papers into Nowell's hand.

"You're a little late to stop to-day's edition," Nowell said.

"It isn't time for you to go to press," the lawyer declared, as he glanced at his watch.

"We're a little early to-day in honor of your visit," the manager explained suavely.

Merrill's face reddened in anger.

"I'm not an adept in these shystering devices," he said with a snort. "But I'll show you what law is before I'm done with you. I intend to put a keeper in for forty-eight hours anyway."

"Useless expense," Haskell said serenely. "Consider your client."

"Damn the expense!" With this parting shot he rose violently and proceeded to the street.

"That was worth a hundred to me," Haskell said with a chuckle. "I called his bluff. He's right when he says he doesn't know about 'shystering.' I could have told him a dozen ways to make you weary."

"How about the keeper?" Nowell asked. "Must we accept him? I'm afraid it will hurt us to have it known that any one has attached for debt."

"You can't help that. It's their right to spend money for spite. I suppose your money and valuable papers are safe from seizure, lawful or otherwise."

"All in my rooms."

"Then I've done all I can to-day, and I'm due in the

Superior Court about this time. Telephone me, if anything important happens before night. I'll call in the morning. Good-by."

Merrill fulfilled his promise. Osborne soon returned, armed with renewed confidence and an elderly man of benevolent aspect, who was presented as Mr. Nicolls, the keeper. Mr. Nicolls seemed to be a quiet, inoffensive old gentleman with a penchant for standing in the office doorway and watching street traffic. Nowell thought Osborne had been very considerate in his choice until the chance remark of a passer-by brought rude awakening.

"Gee!" he said to his companion. "There's old Jack the Catcher in the *Record* office. They must be pinched for debt. He's a sure sign. I guess he's been in on more financial deaths than any man in Fordport."

"Wouldn't you like to go behind the counter and sit down?" Nowell asked, when he recovered from his surprise.

"No, I guess I'll stay here a spell," the old man remarked moderately.

"What's the use in standing there by the door? There's nothing for you to guard there," Nowell said irritably.

"Orders," the keeper explained laconically.

Nowell turned and walked away.

For two days Nicolls stood patiently by the open door, occasionally varying the program by resting his legs in a chair drawn up before it. At intervals Merrill or Osborne drew near to regard his conspicuousness with unmistakable satisfaction. At the end of the second day he quietly withdrew. The attachment had done the



*Record* serious harm. It was generally rumored about the city that the paper was in financial straits, and apt to collapse. Rumors of its insecurity were as all-pervading as reports of financial strength had once been. Where the management merely lacked credit before, they now had to meet a swarm of hungry creditors who threatened various retributive measures if their claims were not paid forthwith. Haskell spent several days in repeating the arguments used against Merrill, and calling attention to the fact that the first attachment had yielded nothing. His professional brethren saw the logic of the situation, and restrained their clients. But the *Record* was in dire need.

"It's up to you, Radbourne," Nowell said gloomily, after a fruitless canvass. "I can't squeeze the rummies at all. I have Yardsley interested some now, and think he will put more in, if St. Clair agrees to pool with him. But to-day I need five hundred to keep the machinery moving. I can't get it, for I've borrowed as much as I can already. We must buy some paper and pay Chisholm in advance. That's his ultimatum. And we must settle bills for wire service, telephone and water. Otherwise, any or all are apt to be cut off in the hour, and we can't spare them. What do you say?"

"Who's St. Clair?"

"He's comparatively new in the city; came from New York. He's in the stamp business as the representative of a syndicate, and seems to have money. Rather likes my style, and used to be in the paper business himself. Got squeezed out, he says, and so feels sympathy for us. When I touched him gently, he talked as though he'd do something with one or more other men."

"On your honor, what do you think of the prospect that he may give us assistance?"

"Without being sure, I think he'll do it."

"I'll see what I can do about the money to-day. I don't know just where to go, for I never borrowed any. But I'll try one or two friends, and see what luck I have."

"That's the spirit," said Nowell. "I'll wait for you here. I can't do anything else, until I have the pressing necessities off my mind."

"How soon can you give me this money?" Radbourne asked as he turned to go.

"By Saturday," Nowell said decisively. "I haven't much doubt that St. Clair and Yardsley will arrange before then to give us all the money we need at present."

"All right, then. If I can get the five hundred, I'll give a short note."

"Why?" Nowell asked with a laugh. "If you borrow it from a friend, he won't expect a note."

"I shall give it anyway. Business has nothing to do with friendship."

"Do it. Saddle yourself with obligations, if you like."

Radbourne walked slowly down the street, running over his list of friends in search of one willing and able to loan. Finally, he turned his steps towards the office of a leading lawyer, whom he had occasionally approached on news topics.

"Is Mr. Dean in?" he asked the clerk.

"Yes. But he is very busy this morning. I'll take your card in."

His entrance to the private office was soon followed by his reappearance, more deferential.

"Mr. Dean will see you at once," he said.

Radbourne entered, seemingly calm but much perturbed. He was about to do what he had never done before. What had always seemed to him a trifle degrading. As he entered the lawyer paused in examination of a paper, and extended his hand with a cordial, "Good morning."

"Sit down," he said. "What can I do for you to-day?"

"I haven't come to see you on a matter of news to-day," Radbourne explained bluntly, still standing and plunging into his mission. "I came to ask you if you will lend me five hundred dollars for thirty days."

If Dean felt surprise, he concealed it.

"I suppose you need the money badly," he said thoughtfully, "or you wouldn't come to me for it."

"Yes," Radbourne blurted, "I need it like the devil."

"You can have it," Dean remarked laconically as he drew his checkbook towards him. "You're welcome."

"If you'll draw a note, I'll sign it," Radbourne said, as he nervously fingered the check. "And I'm tremendously obliged."

"Oh, that's all right. I don't want a note."

"But I'd rather give it," Radbourne persisted. "Make it thirty days."

"If you insist." When the note was duly signed, Dean drew a box of cigars from his desk, and extended it to Radbourne. "Have one," he said cordially. "I've been in tight places myself and always found some one to help me out. So I pass it along. If it isn't convenient for you to pay in thirty days, don't worry."

"That's very good of you," Radbourne said as he rose to go. "But I shall be ready."

He found Nowell impatiently pacing his office.

"Did you get it?" were his first words.

"Yes," Radbourne briefly responded. "Here's a check."

"Dean," said Nowell whistling softly. "How did you manage to tap him? I would have thought it an impossible task. But you saved us to-day, Radbourne. Without this the jig would be up."

"I hope it will save us," Radbourne assented a trifle despondently. The burden of the cause weighed on him heavily. He could not concentrate on usual duties and finally began an examination of the company's books. Nowell had exclusive charge of them, and his system was rather informal. So informal that Radbourne, ignorant of bookkeeping, could learn little from the statements. He was absorbed in his examination when the manager returned.

"Estimating your chances?" he inquired lightly. "Let me put your loan on the day book. I've got the greatest system of bookkeeping in the world. All my own, too."

"I thought so," Radbourne observed. "It doesn't mean much to me."

"Of course not. You don't understand it. Let me show you." He launched into a detailed statement of his method with running illustrations. Radbourne followed him as well as possible, and neither noticed the entrance of Norman until he laid a telegram before them, quietly remarking:

"Here's something of interest."

They read it together:

Paris.

"Italy leaves Peace Conference. Germany refuses to come. Want bulletins? United Press."

"Do we want them?" Nowell shouted. "I should say we do. Here's our chance to show what we can do. We must get out more extras than any other paper, and put them on the street earlier. It's our play to book Yardsley and St. Clair. You arrange for the news, Norman, and I'll get the mechanical force in line."

Without pausing for reply he dashed for the composing-room.

"These special dispatches will be mighty expensive, and each extra is money out of pocket," Norman sighed. "But we must hold our end up. I'll call Goodwin in. He worked in Paris once and may be able to give a pointer on connections."

The city editor quickly responded, with his customary pugilistic attitude, which merely signified attention.

"I've just received a telegram saying the Italian delegates have left Paris, and the German Government balks again," Norman said. "Of course, we must get out our share of extras. I thought you might suggest good connections for specials. You know money is scarce with us, and we don't want to waste any."

Goodwin briefly communed with himself and outlined a plan.

"We can pad the regular bulletins. I'll do that over the name of Francis. With two years' experience in that line while I was on the *Paris Herald*, I ought to

understand it. Then we can pick up something from bulletins of the Associated Press papers. I think, too, we can get something from a fellow who's handling war stuff in a New York office. Will that cover?"

"Fully. Wire your New York man at once and hold the reporters for the evening."

"I've got the composing- and press-room force chained to their posts," Nowell said when he returned. "How do you get on?"

"I think I have satisfactory arrangements to cover all news," Norman said. "We won't be left behind."

The *Record's* first extra was on the street and nearly sold when the *Globe* appeared, beaten by ten minutes. Nowell was happy, surrounded by boisterous newsboys, who scuffed, yelled and devoured sandwiches he provided to hold their allegiance.

"Don't go home, boys," he called. "We'll be getting out more extras soon, and need all of you. This is your time to make money."

"What's de matter wid de guy?" a small voice piped. And the boyish chorus responded, "He's all right!"

Back in the reporters' room Goodwin and two assistants were busy padding wire bulletins, each with a heading, "Special to the *Record*." The rest of the reporters were pursuing cuts, watching the *Globe's* bulletin boards, or performing other services equally obscure and equally necessary. The compositors were rushing with fervor that distinguishes the most obstinate set of "type-stickers" in time of need. Down in the press-room Jack hovered about his pet. She ran smoothly then.

Through the evening the *Record* steadily maintained its lead on the *Globe*, and an increasing crowd before

its office showed that the public recognized superiority.

"Our rout of the *Globe* to-night is a source of satisfaction, if we never issue another edition," Nowell said, as the last issue went to press. "We have shown the Colonel that money without brains has but limited use in the newspaper field."

"This may catch some money for us," Norman suggested.

"It will. Just watch me hypnotize Yardsley, when I see him."

The affable mortgagee called early next morning.

"You did 'em up brown last night," he announced to Nowell. "Everybody is talking about it to-day."

"Of course we did," Nowell said, vigorously. "It showed you what we could do, if we had a chance. Yardsley," he demanded suddenly, "do you want to see us go to the wall after all our struggles?"

"Why, no," Yardsley protested. "You know I want you boys to succeed. I've done what I could to help you."

"Will you pool with St. Clair to put us on our feet? If we live, your mortgage will be good for its face, you know. Our failure means that you receive but a slight percentage."

"Hang the mortgage. I didn't want it. My wife will make it warm if I invest more money here. But I'll do something with St. Clair, if he wants to come in."

"All right. I'll have St. Clair here at eight o'clock to-night. You fellows stick by us, and sometime you'll be glad you plugged the gap."

"I hope so," said Yardsley in a tone at once suggesting hope and uncertainty.

"Cheer up," Nowell admonished. "I lost forty thou-

sand in a week once and never a night's sleep. Have a game of hearts." He was his usual debonair self now, with not a disquieting thought.

"I'll have to go," Yardsley said, suiting action to the word. "The directors of my company meet in Plymouth this noon, and I want to be present. I'll be back at six."

"All right. We expect you at eight. Good-by."

When alone Nowell sat for a time in meditation, then seized his hat and left the office. For several blocks he walked briskly until he reached a store whose show windows, topped by a great sign announcing the home of the green stamp, were filled with articles ranging from a hand-painted pipe to a pink-bound Bible. He entered and threaded his way through a maze of goods to a den where a tall, heavy man with twinkling black eyes and a merry face sat at a desk. He looked up and nodded as Nowell approached.

"Come to catch me for more space to-day?" he asked, genially. "I suppose I ought to keep a revolver for you."

"You couldn't use it to-day, St. Clair. I came over this morning to remind you of your remark that you might be able to join Yardsley in a pool for the *Record*. He is so much pleased by our showing last night that he intimated his inclination to give us something, if you would join him. I told him I would have you at the office to-night, and came to find how you really stand. You see the situation depends on you."

"I don't know just what I can do," St. Clair said, after pondering at length. "But I think I can help enough to bring him in. I haven't much of my own, for I lost my money in a newspaper four years ago. But I



represent a syndicate with several millions, and they give me *carte blanche* in this section. If I want to spend two thousand of their money in *Record* advertising, I don't anticipate objection. I think it's safe for me to promise you this, if Yardsley will put in, we'll say, four thousand."

"That's good. It ought to bring him. I wish you wouldn't say anything about the advertising to-night. It's all right, but Yardsley doesn't understand much about newspapers, and he might get the notion that you only paid money for value received."

"Well, isn't that it?"

"Of course. But to stimulate him it should come in the guise of a loan, which practically it is. While it can be explained a little later, I wish you would let it go as I want at present. It is necessary."

"Very well. I don't like it, though. It isn't my way of doing business. If any trouble comes from it, you'll have to shoulder responsibility."

"I'll shoulder all that comes. I'm tremendously obliged. Shall expect you at eight."

For the rest of the day Nowell was preoccupied. He spent much time in covering several sheets of paper with figures.

Yardsley was the first to arrive. St. Clair soon followed.

"Both on time," Nowell observed approvingly. "We'll give you my private office, I guess. It's better for you to discuss the matter in private."

Before they could express their evident surprise at this remark, he had them started for the office door and closed it after them.

"I don't want to have to spar with them," he explained

to Norman and Radbourne. "Each is fairly convinced that we ought to be helped, and I think we shall soon hear that St. Clair goes two thousand and Yardsley four. These are the sums I have them practically committed to."

But the conference did not dissolve speedily, and the waiting trio were tortured by anxious thoughts. Radbourne began to pace the floor.

"Let's get out an extra," Nowell said satirically. "Radbourne displays agitation. Who would have deemed it possible?"

Radbourne's reply was interrupted by the opening of Nowell's office door, and the appearance of St. Clair and Yardsley. They looked glum as they stood awaiting a question.

"Well, boys," Nowell said with assumed nonchalance, "I suppose you have the deal all fixed up for us."

"No," St. Clair said decisively.

"Why, what's the matter? I thought you practically agreed on arrangements in advance."

"So did I. But Yardsley wants me to match three thousand and I can't do it. So we gave it up."

"Can't you make it four thousand against his two, Bob?" Nowell implored.

"No, I can't," Yardsley asserted, nervously. "I haven't enough ready money. Even on six thousand is my best offer, and I oughtn't to make that."

"That settles it," St. Clair declared, pulling on his gloves and moving towards the street door. "I'm sorry for you fellows, but it's not my fault. I'm standing by all I promised." As he opened the door and turned

up his overcoat collar, no one spoke. "Good night," he called, with his hand on the latch.

Then Yardsley found his voice.

"Wait a minute."

"What for?" St. Clair inquired.

"I want to speak to you a minute."

"All right. But I thought we had finished talking. Make it short."

Again they disappeared in Nowell's office, and again hope battled with fear.

"Let's have an extra with the latest bulletin of the consulting physicians from the bedside of the *Record*," suggested Norman. "High fever and pulse intermittent. Fate wavering in the balance."

This time they had not long to wait for the conferees, whose faces radiated cheer.

"We've agreed to help you with six thousand," St. Clair explained sententiously. "Yardsley puts in four thousand and I two. He will pay first, since I must go through some formalities to obtain my money."

"So you came up with the four thousand, old man!" Nowell exclaimed, as he grasped Yardsley's hand. "I can't tell you both how grateful I am. You've saved us from ruin."

"I hope so," Yardsley said, blushing. "I think I'll have to raise some money on one of my houses to help you, and I don't want to make the sacrifice for nothing."

"Of course not. Now every one come to the club and drink to the *Record's* long life and prosperity." No one objected.

There was a decided change in the atmosphere of the

*Record* office next day. Yardsley called on Nowell early, and for a time afterwards the manager wandered through the establishment with a great roll of bills carelessly held in one hand. With the operatives it had the cheering quality of manna. Hope revived so that even creditors, who called and did not get their money, felt there must be virtue in Nowell's assurance that arrangements for early payment of all claims had been perfected. He made several judicious calls, and before night it was noised about that a Democratic conference, held with the object of securing a new party organ, had resulted in pledges of \$25,000 to support the *Record*, which would become a straight party paper.

"It's working well," Nowell complacently remarked to Radbourne, after a curious visitor had told them of the rumor and departed, minus an authoritative statement.

"What good can it do?" inquired Radbourne. "I thought we were to sail as an independent craft."

"So we were. But it didn't pay. Now that Yardsley's money gives me temporary relief from pressing care, I'm going out in earnest for advertising. A satisfactory response will give hope for continuance. Otherwise, our only hope of escape is in a speedy sale. It would have to be a trade with the Democrats, for the Republican field is overstocked with papers. Now do you see the utility of the rumor? It paves the way."

"Nice prospect for Yardsley," Radbourne said, ironically. "And you painted such a pretty picture for him last night. I imagine he's busy now with calculations of *Record* profits to be, invested in breweries."

"Don't get sarcastic," Nowell retorted. "I had to

fix Yardsley, and I'm working for you and Norman as much as myself. It's every man's duty to look after himself."

"Perhaps," returned Radbourne, "but I don't like the fleecing of friends who are good enough to render aid. It would be better to fail and confess defeat. If it is inevitable, we may as well face the ordeal."

"It isn't inevitable. You give up too easily. I've prestige to maintain. I mustn't fail. You and Norman are alike. He even talked of resigning to-day, when I spoke of this to him. I'm going to the club for a little comfort."

"Don't take too much."

"Be damned," said Nowell, as he walked away.

## CHAPTER XVIII

The city emerged from night as one refreshed by his bath. Still damp roofs showed deeper color in the morning sunlight, and Radbourne felt the agreeable cleanliness of streets swept by rain. Some of yesterday's perplexity, and much of its bitterness, were erased by sleep.

He met Lewis in the square where their ways crossed, and gave him a cheerful nod. The portly editor of the *Globe* hesitated, with a look of astonishment, then jerked his head in a grudging salute as he hurried on. What was he afraid of? Radbourne extracted from his suspicious embarrassment a measure of enjoyment.

As usual, Norman was first at the office. He nodded as Radbourne passed his desk, with a quiet "Good morning," and went on with his work. Some impulse moved Radbourne to look at him curiously,—a short, slight, sallow man, with a dark-brown mustache, and steady brown eyes. Through two years of daily association he had remained in the purely personal sense a stranger,—not that he was secretive, but somehow an occasion for confidences never presented itself. Radbourne wondered how much he himself might be responsible as he turned to the morning mail.

There was a letter from his father, with the pronounced slant of writing colloquially called "back-handed." It had been more than a year since he saw it last. What had happened? He took the letter first from the pile. It was very brief:

"Dear Jim:

I haven't heard from you since you wrote you were starting a paper with two other men. I hope it is going well. But yesterday a Fordport man who didn't know you as a relation of mine was in town, and reported gossip about your concern being in a tight place. Of course, you know that if you need any help you can call on me.

FATHER."

Radbourne folded the letter with a feeling of kinship closer than he had ever known. A few thousand saved, and offered blindly at the call of blood. As he put the letter in his pocket Nowell entered, less debonairly than usual. The boutonniere was missing, and his eyes showed over-indulgence, with lack of sleep. "What's the matter?" he asked sharply, flushing under Radbourne's appraising eyes.

"Nothing at all."

"Then don't sit there looking so damned superior. I've got trouble enough without trying to live up to the Chautauqua standard. Why don't you take a few days off?"

"I!" said Radbourne. "Why?"

"Do you good. Do me good, too. But I can't manage it. Go away for the week-end, anyway. It's Friday, and I want to think. Be a good fellow."

"All right. I will."

The situation amused Radbourne. And Nowell's suggestion touched a dormant impulse. A substitute arranged for, he emerged from the *Record* office with a feeling that approached elation. Where to go? Not

Waterwick. While keenly appreciating his father's offer of assistance, he was averse to discussion of the *Record's* prospects. Not New York. He was in no mood for a great city's impersonal attractions. Westover? His heart warmed to the name. If it was out of season; so much the better. The place was there, with the shining river, the blue hills of the far background, and quiet pastures that sometimes in the sunlight seemed to sleep, and Allen was there, doubtless piping away, with little flourishes of his flageolet, under the apple tree. And he could see Mrs. Allen, stout and kindly, a dab of flour on her nose a reminder of interrupted cooking, standing in the kitchen door.

There was no time to write, and no need to telegraph. The Allens would enjoy the surprise. If he found no one at the station to give him a lift, he would walk through a long stretch of fragrant pines. There was no out about it. Even the railroad schedule suited his convenience,—a train for Westover in about an hour.

His fellow-passengers seemed praiseworthy beings to Radbourne. Signs of goodness and intelligence survived even hours in a day-coach, as the train plodded along the New England coast, softened by Nature's touch in the languorous interval between summer and autumn. For Westover, once approached with misgiving, he had proprietary feeling. The calling of the station caught him unprepared. Roused from meditation by the brakeman's raucous, "Wes-tuv-er!" he secured his bag from the rack and reached the door as the train, with a loud snort, possibly the engine's protest against overwork, got under way. A leap and he landed on the platform, undignified but uninjured.



"What's this? A put-up job?" asked a familiar voice behind him.

He turned to the smiling face of Allen. "This is lucky," he said. "How did you know I was coming?"

"How did you know she was coming?" returned Allen, with a wise smile.

"Know who was coming?" Radbourne was bewildered.

Allen winked. "Look behind you."

As he brushed by to greet the unknown, Radbourne turned to face — Miladi. Evidently, like himself she had been a passenger on the retreating train. She stood there, a modish figure on the Westover platform. A sense of remoteness intensified Radbourne's surprise. For a moment he found no speech.

"Well?" she said.

"I am glad to see you," he responded, awkwardly.

"Thanks," crisply. "You are a very good actor."

Upon Allen she fixed accusing eyes. "Don't blame me," he petitioned, "I didn't tell."

With sudden laughter in her eyes she gave Radbourne her hand. "I guess everybody is innocent. And isn't it nice? How do you happen to be here?"

"Lucky chance — or fate. I'm just taking a day or two off. And you?"

"Oh," with the little *moue* he remembered well, "I'm here for a serious purpose. I want to paint the cove without being bothered by superfluous persons. That doesn't mean you," she added, as he paused in mock hesitation.

They climbed into the surrey behind Allen, who had hustled about with a pleased, important look, and

set out for the Retreat. Little was said. To Radbourne came a new sense of peace. Seemingly Miladi was wrapped in the charm of Westover. Radbourne knew her times of silent communion.

Mrs. Allen waved a welcome from the door. "Somebody was sly," she said, with a smile for both. "But I'm just as glad. The house is all spandy clean, and I've had time to rest up. I'm afraid, though, you can't have your second floor front, Mr. Radbourne. Not knowing you thought of coming, I planned to put Miss Ogden there. A bouquet, you know, and so on."

"Any place —" Radbourne began. Miss Ogden cut him off.

"I'd much prefer my old room. And so would Mr. Radbourne, I'm sure. Let us consider it settled." To Allen: "Will you take my bag to the room I had, and I'll go up now. I feel so sticky after hours on the train."

At supper she was again the girl Radbourne remembered. The hair before closely coiled was freer now in a golden psyche knot; and instead of a smartly tailored street dress she wore a simple waist of blue and a skirt of homespun. He could almost regain the full freedom of informal cordiality lost that last night on the river.

Allen and his wife required little conversational support. Fond of amiable gossip, of late they had lacked listeners. Upon Miladi and Radbourne they lavished anecdotes of remembered guests — of how Mr. Smalley was treed by a belligerent cow he had greeted as a "brother," of Miss Ford's embarrassment in contact with a small hornets' nest encountered in her barefoot promenade, of the Swami who borrowed alcohol to release

house flies from sticky paper. When the stream of reminiscence dwindled with preserves and cake Radbourne seized a favorable moment.

"Would you like to walk down the lane?" he asked.

Miladi instantly assented. "Yes. Very much. If Mrs. Allen will excuse us?"

"'Go it while you're young,'" Mrs. Allen quoted placidly.

A few late birds were calling, as they walked down the lane to the cove. Preparing for its exit, the sun gave fiery backing to clouds banked on the horizon. The wind came warm from the water, and wafted registration of the hour by a clock in a town miles away.

"Isn't this better than the city?" Miladi asked, as they crossed the brook skirting the hill.

"For a while at least. It's cleaner."

"I fear," she said, "you have no real fondness for country life."

"Perhaps not," he assented. "Has any one who has been confined to it?"

In argument but slightly tinged by the personal they sat while the sun went down, with theatric suddenness, and twilight came fast. A cooler wind whirled up the hill. From the clouds came a low growl of thunder.

"It's going to rain," said Radbourne. "And soon," as a drop of water fell on his upturned face. They rose hastily and started down the hill. A moment's patter presaged the storm as they reached the lane.

"Can you run a bit?" he asked. "If we can reach the barn, we'll be safe."

Her answer was a start so swift she was yards ahead before he pursued her. They arrived with the storm.

Lightning split the sky, releasing its flood gates as they dashed through a half-open door.

"Congratulations," he said.

"Thanks," she answered from the gloom. "I *am* tired."

He heard her labored breathing and put his arm about her shoulders protectively. Neither spoke as they stood there in the darkness. Upon the roof the rain lashed still more fiercely. The thunder deafened, and the play of lightning was almost continuous. The climax came in a report like a terrific ripping sound. She clung to him in that moment, and he took her in his arms. He found her lips that answered his. The storm, the world disappeared. And he knew Nirvana. For a moment only. She quietly freed herself.

"Why did you do it?" she asked.

"I wanted to," he said.

Brief silence. The storm abated, subsiding almost as rapidly as it had risen.

"I think we could reach the house now," Miladi said.  
"It isn't far."

He followed her to the door, and saw lights of the Retreat gleaming, a few hundred yards away. Without further parley he followed her up the road to the house. Mrs. Allen met them at the door.

"Mercy's sake! Where have you been? Are you soaked to the skin? I sent Asa for you with an umbrella, and he came back wet as a *drowned* hen. He's upstairs now changing his clothes. Has rheumatism, you know. But Mercy's sake!" She suspended the monologue to verify her astonishment. "You ain't wet a bit."

"We ran when the first drops came," Radbourne ex-

plained, "and got to the barn just as it came down hard."

"So you was safe and snug all the time. When the big apple tree in the yard was struck I wouldn't have given a gill of vinegar for anybody's chances. And I thought of you as being in the middle of it all. I haven't seen Asa so worried for years. But Mercy's sake, I'm running on like all possessed. Come into the parlor. I lighted a fire in the Franklin to take off the dampness. Even a little," she went on over her shoulder, "does help."

They were hardly seated in rockers drawn up to the blaze when Mrs. Allen, who had filled her lap with knitting, started in response to a call of "Sar-ah!" somewhere in the upper part of the house. "That's Asa," she explained. "I'll see what he wants."

Left to themselves, Radbourne and Miladi took note of their surroundings, a temporary relief from examination of themselves. It was a New England parlor typical of the Reconstruction period with the sea shells on the mantel; the family photograph album, with heavy clasps; crayon portraits on the wall; the sofa with horse-hair covering; tidies on the straight-back chairs, and the housewife's triumph in braided rugs.

"Darby and Joan," Radbourne observed, at the close of mutual inventory. He extended his hand. She smiled, but did not take it. As he rose, she read his purpose in his eyes.

"No," she said. "Nothing trivial, please."

Protestation was smothered on his lips by the bustling entrance of Mrs. Allen.

"Asa feels his rheumatism coming on," she explained. "And I'll have to make him as comfortable as possible."

I guess you young folks can get along without us. Would you be wanting a lunch by-an-by?"

"I don't think so," Miladi answered. "Unless Mr. Radbourne needs something to sustain him."

"I had a day's rations in supper," he declared.

"Just as you say," observed Mrs. Allen, collecting her knitting. "I guess you know the way to the ice-chest, if you change your mind. Come to breakfast any time you feel like it. I'll be up hours before you're awake. Good night."

They listened to her heavily retreating footsteps on the stairs. Then Miladi took the initiative.

"How are you getting on with your paper?" she abruptly inquired.

"About as badly as possible."

Radbourne was shocked to candor in the sudden shift from contemplation of purely personal relations.

"What's the matter?" she pursued.

"Everything,—insufficient capital, bad management, prejudice, unfair competition."

"That's enough for an excuse. I'd like to hear some of the details."

Thinking her tone a little cutting, he hesitated. With her spurring question,—“Don't you believe I can understand them?” he plunged in. He told all, even the humiliating alliance of Nowell's fashioning, without reserve. If Miladi received any phase squeamishly, she concealed it. Her questions were pertinent. And Radbourne wondered at her grasp of interweaving conditions.

"It looks rather hopeless," she said at length.

"I'm afraid so," he assented, despondently.

"But you could pull it through alone."

"I could do it for you," he declared impulsively.

"Not for me. For yourself. And for the sake of the job. Isn't that enough?"

"Yes," he said. "But it would help to hope."

She checked him firmly. "I want you to forget what has happened to-night. And I want you to go back to Fordport to-morrow morning. Yes," meeting his look of surprise, "it is best. I am glad you came. And I trust you are glad, too. But I want to paint. And you have ceased, you see, to be my comfortable and negligible assistant. Will you do as I wish? And do your best?"

"Of course," he said, stiffly, and stood as she rose with an air of relief. "Must I forget you?"

"Of course,—if you can." She gave him an inscrutable look. Then she smiled, and offered him her hand. "You really should be called 'Jimmy,' you know. I won't see you to-morrow. Good night, and good-by."

She was gone before he recovered from his astonishment. He listened half-incredulously for the sound of a closing door. When it came he walked slowly to the center-table and extinguished the lamp. As he made his way upstairs in the dark his mind was in ferment. A kiss in the dark — how little it meant! — and how much! Miladi apparently preferred to forget it. Was her interest in him, then, merely friendly? He chided himself for making too much of her parting words. But an alluring vision invaded his mind as he drifted off to sleep.

He woke to bright sunshine, and Allen beating reveille on his door.

"Yes," he called sleepily.

"It's time to get up, if you want that train."

"What train?" he was at the door now.

"Why, the morning train. No mistake, is there?" Astonishment was dawning in Allen's face. "Miss Ogden said a telegram came late last night, and you had to leave this morning."

"Right," said Radbourne, getting his bearings. "It was kind of her to tell you. Evidently, she is up."

"Oh, yes," smiled Allen. "No flies on her. Gone out to paint half-an-hour ago. I gave you all the time I could."

"A case of hustle, is it? Then I'll be with you in a jiffy."

Mrs. Allen was volubly regretful. "I declare, it's a shame. No more than got here, and you have to go right back. It's a pity they couldn't let you alone at least one two-days. You'll come back, won't you?"

"I surely will, if you'll have me," called Radbourne, as Allen slapped his white steed with the reins, and they rolled away.

"Didn't stay even long enough to get the mitten," his host observed cheerfully.

"No, there was that luck about it."

Allen chuckled, and touched his horse, very delicately, with the whip. "Did I tell you that good one about Charles E. and the Swami?" he asked. There was nothing personal in conversation after that. Allen speeded him on the way with, "Come again," and a wave of his hat after he was seated in the train.

Radbourne felt his visit was not altogether fruitless. But he could not tell why, as the miles clicked away, each bearing him nearer to a dolorous situation.



## CHAPTER XIX

The fall days came, and the season of fall advertising began. But it did not benefit the *Record* much. The stigma of a "rum sheet" clung to it. Nowell made a thorough canvass of the city's mercantile interests, and vainly exerted his utmost powers to secure their patronage. On various pretexts they declined to yield. The *Record's* weekly operating expenses still exceeded receipts by a thousand dollars. The paper earned no more than in the first week of its existence; and there was little likelihood that it would.

"We must face the situation now," Nowell gloomily announced in a council of the three. "I've done my best and failed. The case is for your solution now. If we had money to last a year, I know we could force the business men to come to us. But resources are confined to a fortnight's operating expenses remaining from Yardsley's money. We can't publish the *Record* in Fordport. Therefore we must quit by sale or assignment. Can either of you offer a suggestion on the question of sale?"

"There's Thornton, if you want to sound the Democratic slogan," Radbourne remarked.

"Don't know him. Who is he?"

"A good thing for the Democracy; a lawyer whose practice is neglected for the holding of all sorts of party offices, save those of profit. He's president of several political clubs, and a star at Jeffersonian barbecues. He

stands well with party leaders of the state. A few years ago he sank what money he had in a Democratic paper here, and believes it would still be alive, if he had received proper support. He told me only yesterday that there is a field in Fordport for an energetic Democratic daily, and expressed hope that we might support the ticket in the next municipal campaign."

"Just the man we need to find a purchaser. When will you introduce me to him?"

"To-day, if you like. But I warn you he's a dictatorial fellow. He may suggest things to be done on the paper before he shows you the color of a dollar. If he does, you must receive them respectfully, or have a falling out with him at the start."

"At this stage of the game I'll take anything leading to money. Lead me to him."

Thornton was at his office engaged in sending out circulars for a mass meeting under the auspices of one of his clubs.

"I've been at it since morning," he said to Radbourne, when he had given his stenographer a complete list of addresses. "What can I do for you?"

"I've been thinking over what you said to me yesterday about the field for a Democratic daily in Fordport. So I brought Mr. Nowell, our manager, to discuss the matter with you. He thinks rather favorably of it."

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Nowell," Thornton said, with a hearty grip. "And I shall be glad to give you any information I possess."

"Thanks," Nowell replied, as he lighted a cigar. "Of course we have been an independent organ and as such commanded a support we cannot afford lightly to throw

away. But both Mr. Norman and myself are Democrats, and really prefer to be officially within the fold. So if we can be assured proper support, or if the Democratic machine desires to take control of the paper, we will be inclined to make an early declaration of allegiance. Perhaps, however, you do not consider it possible. I called because Radbourne represented the matter so strongly."

He spoke with an assumption of independence by which Thornton was evidently impressed. He hastened to respond:

"I'm glad you came to me; I've had such a combination in mind. I think I may arrange for a few friends of mine through the state to take the management of the *Record*. I know by experience that little can be done in Fordport. I had a sad lesson here. From your work on the *Globe*, I am convinced that with proper backing you would make the *Record* a pronounced success. I know the influence you have combated thus far. Now will you give me a rough outline of present conditions, so I may talk to my friends?"

Nowell did, with fluency and enthusiasm. Omitting no detail, he painted every dream vision from the start, ingeniously juggled figures and forgot unpleasant facts, until Radbourne almost doubted whether he was representing a prosperous property or a forlorn hope. When Nowell concluded, Thornton was conquered. He was a sanguine man, too.

"While you were talking to me," he said, "I thought of my friend Colonel Jones of Plymouth as the man to make the paper a success. He has money, press experience and a host of friends. I know he wanted a paper in

Fordport a few years ago, and think he may be of the same mind now. I'll write him to-day."

"Do," Nowell said as he rose to go. "See if you can't bring him down here soon. That's the only way matters can be arranged. We would like to make some arrangement speedily."

Outside he added to Radbourne:

"Jones's money and Jones's friends are good. But I don't care for his experience. A little knowledge is a dangerous thing in this case. Did I talk well to Thornton?"

"You're a magnificent liar."

"Thanks. I thought I was doing fair work. I know how I can fix Jones, too. Straight advertising is out of our reach, but I can cut rates and get enough stuff by agreeing to accept goods in part payment. It hardly pays for setting up, but the general public gets an impression of prosperity. A little carelessness in accounts won't make it too conspicuous on the books. What do you think?"

"That I wouldn't have entered the *Record* Company, if I had anticipated such things."

"I know you wouldn't. But you don't have to do it. You haven't done much for the paper, Radbourne, though your immaculate standing has been a little useful to us. Let's see what Norman says."

Norman manifested no emotion.

"I suppose," he remarked, "that beggars mustn't be choosers. But rush the deal, Nowell. I want to get back to Virginia, and take quinine for my conscience."

Nowell did rush the deal. He put in several days among the merchants, and the *Record* put on the appear-

ance of prosperity. At the paper's advertising rates presented in its schedule a handsome profit should have been earned.

"I guess I'll have to stop now," Nowell remarked, after examining an issue in which advertising over-balanced reading matter. "I have just taken the contract of Swett, the pious dry goods man, for a full page."

"I didn't suppose he would come on any terms," said Radbourne. "What rate did you give him?"

"Gratis: a receipt for the full month in advance. That shows how much conscientious scruples had to do with his previous refusal to come in. It was merely a question of dollars he didn't want to spend; and so with the other big fellows."

"Tell it to Yardsley. He's coming across the street now."

Yardsley closely examined the *Record* with a look of pleasure.

"It looks good to-night," he said. "You're just beginning to get in your fine work, Nowell. Seems almost a pity to sell a paper when it's just beginning to pay."

"So it does," Nowell admitted. "But we haven't enough money to work safely, and the purchasers in view would follow our license policy. Of course, otherwise, we wouldn't think of selling to them after all you've done for us."

"When is Jones coming?"

"Thornton expects him Saturday. He wrote and wired to bring him here, and received practical assurance of his presence on that date."

But Jones did not appear on Saturday, though in preparation for his coming the *Record* establishment was put

in its finest order, and special pains taken with the day's edition.

"He was suddenly sent to the Adirondacks by his physician," Thornton explained when he brought a telegram in lieu of his man. "But he hopes to get away in a week and come here. Can you wait for him?"

"We shall try," said Nowell. "Wire him to that effect."

"Observe the luxury of truth," he added when Thornton had hurried away. "We shall try to wait for him. Literally correct. St. Clair hasn't his money yet, and Yardsley's is nearly gone. In his present dream of prosperity a touch for more cash would be a cruel shock. By cutting our stenographer, the circulation man, and one or two others we can afford to trust, I think we can get through the payroll to-day. But the coming week will bring imperative necessities, and I guess we must rely on you, Radbourne, to meet them. The *Record's* credit has vanished, but you can personally command trust with Chisholm and a few others."

"What about the five hundred I borrowed? You said you would get that in a few days. My thirty days' note expires to-morrow."

"Well, you shouldn't have been careless enough to give it. I warned you against it. You can let it stand a little while, though, and I promise I'll set aside the money for it as soon as possible. That's the best I can do, for we must take care of the payroll. Of course, we three pass this week."

"It's a great privilege to conduct a newspaper," Norman solemnly interposed. "I used to get fifty a week on the *Globe*, and this is the sixth consecutive week

we've had to be satisfied with board or less. I'm going to give my landlord some stock in payment of dues. See if you can similarly hoodoo the staff, Nowell. A cooperative establishment is one of the few dreams left to us."

The staff were easily satisfied — by full payment of salaries. But the stenographer regretted — soon after she was told that a portion of her salary would be paid on Monday — that illness demanded her presence at home. And a similar notice reminded the circulation agent that he had a better place in view. Nowell understood what it was when he saw him that evening in conference with the business manager of the *Globe*.

"The *Globe* people will make a fresh assault now," he remarked. His prediction was justified by speedy developments. Within twenty-four hours it became known to every trades union in Fordport that the *Record* had failed to pay salaries in full. The news spread rapidly. In guise of general information the *Globe* printed a lengthy article showing the great expense of publishing a daily paper and quoted statistics on the small proportion of papers reaching maturity. It also hinted that in Fordport the Democratic machine would take up a literary burden laid down by the rum syndicate. The names of several men, including Jones, were given as those said to be interested in the matter. By some means each of Nowell's moves was at once known to the opposition. The Colonel was using every connection to crush his ex-manager.

Radbourne found it no easy matter to obtain supplies. Paper gave him the most trouble. It was an imperative necessity daily, and Chisholm balked at credit.

"The *Record* doesn't deserve credit," he declared, when Radbourne first approached him. "It's mortgaged, and I can't find any capital behind it. You owe me something now. Then, I don't feel inclined to do anything for Mr. Nowell. When I called last to see him about the account, he was insulting."

Radbourne had heard this complaint before, and was prepared for it.

"I hope you will overlook seeming discourtesy on Mr. Nowell's part," he requested. "I am sure he intended none. He overworks, and is sometimes nervous and irritable. I wish you would grant this credit as a personal favor to me. I have invested all my available money in the *Record*, and I think we can pull it through. In fact, I may say that a proposal for sale is now at hand."

"Well, if I do," Chisholm allowed, "it will be on your account. Will you guarantee the bill?"

"If you send up the paper at once. We need it this afternoon."

"Very well. Thomas, take this gentleman's order for immediate delivery."

Thomas complied, and Radbourne congratulated himself on accomplishment of the most difficult portion of his mission. The telephone company he silenced temporarily by a request for investigation of a few items in a long account. Similar tactics prevailed with the telegraph companies.

There was no money to stay execution of the press association's threat to suspend service if its outstanding account was not paid forthwith. But Nowell found a



way out of this difficulty. He sent a dispatch announcing, "Check mailed to-day."

"That will hold them off for a few days," he affirmed. "And by that time Jones will be here. We date all things from him now."

This time Jones came.

In accordance with previous arrangements Thornton reached the office with him at eight in the evening. Nowell at once took him in tow for a tour of inspection. He dwelt on the excellence of the plant and prospects for success in his usual brilliant way. Jones was visibly impressed. When they rejoined the others and cigars were lighted, the manager opened fire directly.

"What do you think?" he inquired.

"That the Democrats of Fordport have a great opportunity," Jones promptly responded.

"But we are talking to you personally," Nowell urged with surprise.

"I'm afraid there's been a misunderstanding. I will say frankly that I did not come here to-night to buy the *Record*. I would not have come at all, if Thornton had not shown his usual persistency. You see, my health is so poor I dare not undertake heavy labor. Then I have not enough capital to attack the proposition with confidence. Lastly, I have a well-established paper in Plymouth,—which would be neglected if I took a daily here. At any rate, it isn't an encouraging prospect for an outsider, if the local Democracy will not help itself."

He ceased abruptly and began to puff at his cigar. Thornton broke an awkward silence.

"It seems," he said, with heightened color and a tone

betraying resentment, "that Colonel Jones's statement places me in a peculiar position. I certainly thought he seriously considered the purchase of this paper as a party organ. If he intimated to me that he only came here through curiosity, I was too dense to understand him."

"I didn't say I would buy the paper," Jones declared.

"I don't dispute you. But you neglected the plain English most suitable in such matters. I want to ask you now if you will be one of a syndicate to buy the plant and place it under the direction of some competent manager?"

"I don't see my way clear to do it. There should be enough Democrats in the state to carry the enterprise through safely. I'm doing my duty by the party at home, and don't feel bound to dip in here."

"Then you decline to interest yourself in the *Record*?"

"Yes, if you put it that way. If you want my endorsement with any one, I'll give it. That is the best I can do. I ought to return to Plymouth to-night in order to meet an engagement in the morning. I must bid you gentlemen good evening. I'm sorry I can't help you."

Without further ado he buttoned his coat, flecked the ashes from his cigar, and departed. The closing of the street door roused Nowell from an apathy of wonder.

"And there goes our Moses," he said satirically. "How did you get an impression, Thornton, that he might take the plant off our hands?"

"He indicated as much in a letter without flatly committing himself. He even showed enthusiasm for the plan I outlined to him. I think I can fathom the rea-

son for his sudden disinclination to touch the paper. When I found him at his hotel this evening, he was in conversation with a Fordport Democrat who is close to Colonel Robinson in several business deals. Besides, he is a confirmed political croaker and off-ox. He has a rather suave way, though, and impresses men not well acquainted with him. As I approached them I caught the word "*Record*." Then they stopped abruptly. During my short walk from the hotel here Jones avoided the topic. I give you my candid opinion that the *Globe* got wind of his errand, and tampered with him."

"I don't care who did it. The game's up."

"What do you mean?"

"That the *Record* suspends to-morrow."

"You didn't tell me the situation was so bad as that. I understood you could float a while, and didn't really need to close with Jones now."

"Maybe. But now I give you the candid truth. We are at the end of our rope."

"Can't you hold on a few days, while I approach other friends with money and interest in party success? I know a newspaper man up state, who is in close touch with several leaders and wants to place himself at the head of a paper. I think this would suit him. He was located in Fordport once—and if he asks for backing, he will get it. I didn't mention him before, for he would want full control of the paper. I thought you wanted to stay with it. Shall I write to him?"

"It won't be any use. We are strapped for daily funds now, and have no way to secure enough to run on another week even."

"All right," Thornton replied. "I am sorry to think

of your going to the wall. I know the taste from personal experience."

"Why don't you let him try it?" Yardsley inquired. It was his first remark since arriving. During the conference he sat silent, with regret and his usual jovial expression struggling for the mastery.

"You know why," Nowell replied, sharply. "We haven't any money, and you are done. You said so."

"I know I can't afford to put in another dollar. St. Clair threw me down by promising to chip with me last time and then pretending that he couldn't raise the money. But this may bring back part of what I have planted, and I'm willing to stand behind another week's expenses. You haven't received anything yet from St. Clair, have you?"

"Not a cent. If you want another chance, I'm willing for Thornton to try his friend. What's his name?"

"Scott. A clever man. I'll go over to the office now and write a letter explaining the situation and asking him to come here as soon as possible. On second thought, I'll telephone him to expect the letter. Good-by."

"Another reprieve," Norman mused as he switched off lights which informed Fordport that the *Record* was "Bright, Newsy, and Up-to-Date."

"I want the matter off quickly," Nowell said, harshly. "I can't stand this strain much longer."

Radbourne looked at him closely and saw for the first time that he had lost flesh, and he showed wrinkles under his eyes which mirrored distrust rather than their normal cool audacity. He was unused to being the under dog, and took it badly.

Two days later Thornton telephoned that he would call at the *Record* office with Scott in a few hours.

"He seems pleased with the prospect and anxious to see the plant," he said to Nowell. "Get things into the best possible shape for him. He knows the business, and will appreciate it."

Again there was a hurried scouring of the plant from business office to pressroom, with orders to make special effort on the day's editions. By this time the staff had guessed the situation and worked with redoubled energy.

"They've all been loyal to us. We have that to think of, whatever happens," Nowell said, as he examined the edition with pride.

Scott proved to be a man of unpretentious, even somewhat provincial, appearance. But he soon convinced Nowell that he knew the newspaper business, and the manager argued with the enthusiasm of an advocate in his first case. At times he even felt that his alluring picture was genuine. Within an hour of his arrival, Scott departed.

"I'm impressed by your plant and what you tell me regarding progress," he remarked at parting. "I think with proper backing the *Record* would win as a Democratic organ. I'd like to undertake its management. Until I see a few of my moneyed friends, I cannot tell my course. But I'll advise you as soon as possible."

Later in the day Thornton returned.

"I've just left Scott at the station and he wants the paper," he said. "There's no doubt of it. He suggested to me that it may aid him with men he must ask for money, if you swing to the support of the Democratic ticket at once. The campaign begins next week."

"I fail to see how he could be helped that way," Nowell promptly returned. "But you consult Norman about it. I don't interfere with editorial policy any more."

"I don't understand what benefit that would be to Scott," the editor remarked, when Thornton repeated his suggestion. "But I'm a Democrat, and it won't go against the grain for me to throw out the party banner. If we sell, the paper is to be Democratic. If we die, the hue of death won't matter. I think we may as well comply with his request. I'll make an announcement to-morrow."

On the editorial page next day blossomed a declaration of fealty to the principles of Jefferson. Again Dame Rumor worked. A few hours sufficed for general circulation of a report that after troublous days the *Record* had floated into port, received by a wealthy syndicate whose agent was Scott. His visit was noted by other papers in connection with ambiguous hints of a new daily. Nowell, Norman, and Radbourne were freely congratulated by numerous friends, some of them rediscovered, and bore it with composure.

"Only two more days of grace," Radbourne remarked Friday morning. "It won't be Yardsley's donation party next week. If we don't hear from Scott this morning, I think we ought to telephone him that haste is imperative."

"Perhaps Yardsley may repeat," Nowell said calmly. "He has said at least three times that he wouldn't give another penny, and later responded in a crisis."

Scott did not communicate with them until a telegram summoned him to the telephone.

"I'm not prepared to answer definitely now," he told Nowell. "I haven't been able to confer with the man I rely on most. But I'm confident I can secure the necessary loan."

"What is your figure?" asked Nowell.

"Fifty thousand is the smallest sum with which I would undertake to build up the paper."

"All right. Shall I hear from you in a few days?"

"By Monday."

"I don't believe he can raise fifty thousand," Nowell told Norman afterwards. "Fifty thousand couldn't be raised for anything in this section of the state, except a cemetery association. Still, I'll send for Yardsley and make a grandstand play for enough money to give Scott another week. A few hundred won't make a vast difference to him at this stage of the game."

It was not necessary to send for Yardsley. Soon after he arrived in an excited condition.

"I want to see you, Nowell," he said abruptly.

"All right. Come into my office. I'm glad you called," he continued when he had closed the door behind them, "for I wanted to see you to-day. I've just heard from Scott, and he says he is confident he can raise fifty thousand to take the paper, if he is given another week. Now will you help us again, or shall we go down in sight of land? I hate to ask you, but it seems the only way. What do you say?"

"Not a cent. And I want some things explained."

Nowell's face bore traces of anger. A dictatorial role was new to Yardsley.

"Go ahead," he said shortly. "But don't be crusty. What do you want to know?"

"How much have you received from St. Clair?"

"Not a dollar. I've told you that two or three times."

"It's a lie!"

Nowell leaned forward with an ugly smile.

"Be careful how you talk," he said, "or I'll act."

"I'm not mincing words," Yardsley declared in a voice choked with anger. "You had the treasurer of the Princess theater cash St. Clair's check for five hundred last Tuesday. I heard the manager speak to him about it when I was in the box office this afternoon. I've stood by you against the advice of my friends, and you've done me dirt. I'm through with you. But I want to know how much of St. Clair's money you have. You took it, and then branded him to me as a liar. You're a bunco man. Do you hear!"

"Yes, I hear," Nowell answered gently. He had regained control of his temper and now regarded Yardsley with disdain. "What you said is untrue, but on account of all you've done for us, I'll let it pass. But you aren't entitled to an explanation, if I had one to give. I have only to suggest to you that unless the money for next week is in my hands by to-morrow, I shall sever my connection with the *Record* and wash my hands of its business. You'll be able to realize about ten per cent on your mortgage. What's your answer?"

"You have it. Not a cent. Don't come near me again!" With this valedictory Yardsley left, slamming the door behind him.

Nowell drank deeply from his bottle, lighted a cigar and strolled to the outer office, where Norman and Radbourne waited.



"I couldn't pull his leg," he announced without waiting for questions. "I presented the unvarnished situation to him, and he refused to yield another penny."

"Probably his final decision this time," Norman suggested. "What shall we do?"

"Nothing. I won't be worried to death by the paper. If he doesn't produce the money by to-morrow noon, I shall resign and wash my hands of the business."

"That's all right for you," Radbourne said, sharply. "But what will become of the *Record*?"

"I don't know, or care much. You can run it, if you want to. You can't accuse me of selfishness. I've borne the brunt all the way, and served as a target for the paper's enemies. You and Norman got off scott free, while they all plugged me. I won't stand it any longer."

"You don't know of the Colonel's latest stunt," Norman interjected, holding up a little yellow booklet. "Yeager left this souvenir while you were closeted. He had it from a friend of the Colonel. It seems to be the 'Life' of James E. Nowell, compiled by the Pinkerton agency. He appears to have been a race-track hanger on, the ex-husband of a Boston woman and the father of five children, all deserted, and a principal in an elopement by which a New York girl of wealthy family was separated from relatives and funds. Like to see it?"

"No."

"What will you do to them for it?" asked Radbourne.

"Nothing. I've no money to waste in lawsuits. And,

anyway, it doesn't look as though I would be in Fordport much longer. Remember, it's the money by tomorrow noon, or I'm out." He snatched his stick and was gone before they could remonstrate.

Radbourne whistled meditatively for a few minutes.

"Pretty condition," he finally remarked. "What'll you do about it?"

"Go to the club," Norman promptly replied as he took his hat. "Come up with me."

"No, thanks. I want to see Yardsley. I've a fair pull with him, and can find out his final attitude. From Nowell's temper, after he left, I think they quarrelled."

Yardsley speedily convinced Radbourne that his service as "angel" was past.

"I won't give Nowell another cent," Yardsley declared. "But I'll do my part with Scott, if he wants to take hold. I hadn't ought to do it, but I hate to see the paper die when people have me classed as its backer. Nowell will never make it go. Money given him is wasted. You can tell him I said so."

Yardsley held firm to his decision, but Nowell retreated from his position. After asserting he was about to tender his resignation as treasurer and business manager, he consented to withhold it if Norman and Yardsley would place their stock with his in the hands of Yardsley as attorney.

"In spite of his mulish action," he said, "I wish him well, and I think that Scott would prefer to do business with one man who has money invested here. We can trust him to treat us fairly."

It seemed a reasonable proposition, and was speedily agreed to. Within an hour the power of attorney was

executed. Nowell placed it, with their stock certificates, in Radbourne's hands.

"You can call and give it to Yardsley on your way up town," he said. "Norman and I have some accounts to adjust as president and treasurer of the company."

"All right. When shall I see you again?"

"About the usual hour in the morning."

Radbourne departed with a feeling of relief. For months he had known that Nowell's intemperate manner and questionable friends handicapped the paper in its struggle for a foothold. Without underestimating his ability, it seemed that his elimination as an active agent in the transfer would brighten the *Record's* prospects of salvation.

Yardsley accepted his trust with pleasure.

"It's the fair thing," he said. "I'll look out for you. I think I can land Scott with matters in this shape. I'll call at the office in the morning. Perhaps you'll hear from him before then."

## CHAPTER XX

In the morning Radbourne sent to the post office for the *Record* mail. It was his custom, since he usually arrived first and they had not cared to trust the office boy with a key. Wondering somewhat he broke the seal of a letter addressed to himself in Nowell's familiar nervous hand. Then he wondered more.

"Dear Radbourne," it ran. "This is to inform you that Norman and I are leaving Fordport and the *Record*. Could we see our way clear to remain and push the paper to success, we would gladly do so. But we think we have done our part. We hope that negotiations will reach a satisfactory termination, and that all claims will be made good. You will hear from us when we are settled.

"Very truly,

"J. E. NOWELL."

Radbourne read the letter again, feeling his eyes must have deceived him. But there was the stunning statement. He must verify it. Seizing his hat, he set out swiftly to Nowell's hotel.

"Is Mr. Nowell in?" he inquired at the desk in a voice intended to sound careless.

"He isn't here," the clerk answered. "Paid his bill and left, about five o'clock yesterday afternoon."

"Any one with him when he left?"

"Yes. Mr. Norman."

Radbourne pondered the advisability of further questions. It would give the clerk an inkling that something was wrong. But he wanted to learn as much as possible about his whilom partners. At any rate the news of their departure would soon spread.

"Do you know where they went?" he continued.

"They didn't tell me, but I heard Nowell tell a friend that they were going to San Francisco. They haven't slipped you, have they?" This was facetious, but Radbourne seized the opening.

"Yes," he admitted, with embarrassment, "they have. I suppose it will come out, but I wish you would say nothing about it at present."

"Of course not. I suspected as much when they left. Both were pretty well sprung, especially Norman."

"Thanks," said Radbourne. "Keep it dark."

On his way back to the office he revolved the situation. In the face of the negotiations for sale of the paper its manager and editor had deserted it. Still, they "hoped for a satisfactory termination." Their good wishes seemed worthless. By force of circumstances he had become the business and editorial chief of a bankrupt paper, without money or credit. Still, he might weather the storm if Yardsley stood by. Without his aid the paper must suspend at once.

By this time he had reached the office. In sorting the mail he found several other letters addressed in Nowell's hand to heads of departments. Surmising their contents, he locked them up in his desk. Presently appeared the foreman compositor with a bundle of slips.

"I'm waiting for instructions on to-day's ads," he

announced. "Mr. Nowell hasn't came in. What shall I do?"

"Mr. Nowell is unexpectedly called away for several days. For to-day make up from the bookkeeper's records. I'll give you further instructions later."

Next he called Goodwin in.

"Mr. Norman won't be here for a few days," he said, as though the occurrence was nothing unusual. "I want you to act in his absence. Meagher is fit for substitute city editor, isn't he?"

"Yes, he'll answer well enough. What shall I do editorially?"

Radbourne reflected. Norman had partially committed the *Record* to the Democratic ticket. Then Yardsley was a Democrat. It didn't matter much, and he hated to crawfish.

"Follow the Democratic lead," he instructed, "and make it strong. Put on an extra reporter or two for a few days. I want the paper to look well. Just get more illustrations than we've been using, too."

At this juncture Yardsley appeared.

"Read this," he said, thrusting a duplicate of Radbourne's letter into his hand.

"They've gone," Radbourne said after a hasty glance. "I went up to Nowell's hotel when I got a letter like yours this morning, and the clerk told me they left for San Francisco last night. Then I came back here and have just got the machinery moving after a fashion. Of course, you understand this comes as a complete surprise to me."

"Yes. What are you going to do?"

"It depends on you. In some respects Nowell's de-

parture is a blessing. He handicapped every move for a sale. If you care to back me for a week, which you refused to do for him, I may be able to sell to Scott. If not, we must suspend at once. I leave the matter with you, and won't have hard feelings if you conclude to stop now."

Yardsley twirled his thumbs and scowled.

"It's our only chance," he said, finally. "I'll go just one week more. That's the limit."

"All right. And I'll try to bring you safely through."

The telephone rang.

"Hullo," Haskell called, when Radbourne took up the receiver, "who is it?"

"Radbourne."

"Where are Nowell and Norman?"

"Did you get a letter?"

"Yes. Suppose it's true then. What will you do?"

"Try to keep on until I can sell. I want to see you to-day. What shall I do if the creditors get wind and descend on me?"

"Refer them to me. And if they are obstreperous, send them to me. How are the accounts?"

"Don't know yet. I haven't had time to look at the books. But I don't think they carried much money away. It wasn't to be had."

"Nowell touched me for fifty yesterday." Vigorous remarks on abuse of counsel followed before Radbourne shut off.

"So I wasn't the only victim," Yardsley said with a grin. "Do you need any money to-day?"

"I don't know. I haven't had a chance to count the cash on hand."

"Well, dig into the books a little, and I'll come in later to see how things stand."

Digging into the books disclosed little. It seemed as if Nowell, anticipating departure, had made no effort at systematic accounts for several weeks past. It appeared, however, that a number of fairly large bills were due. Radbourne directed towards them the attention of a sleepy-eyed girl lately employed by Nowell to replace his bookkeeper. Cash on hand amounted to \$8.84. The departed had assessed the till.

While Radbourne mused on this sudden wealth, a Bradstreet representative appeared with apologetic mien.

"I'm looking for the manager," he remarked.

"What can I do for you?" returned Radbourne.

"Oh," the agent said with a smile, "I just called to find out whether there is any truth in the rumor that the business manager and editor have skedaddled with funds, making suspension of the paper necessary."

Publicity had outrun Radbourne's apprehension. Still, he reflected, the situation must be faced, and frankly.

"You are partially right," he admitted. "The manager and editor have gone. But they did not decamp with the company's money. As an officer of the corporation I have assumed direction of affairs, and suspension is not considered."

"Much obliged. Do you mind telling me who the present officers are? And what the paper's prospects look like?"

"I can't do either in justice to friends."

"Thanks," said the agent, as he rose to go. "I'm glad you are not swamped. You've a lot of friends who



didn't fancy the other fellows. They'd like to see you win out."

Creditors soon came in such numbers it was evident news of the paper's loss in talent had circulated with great rapidity. To all Radbourne told the same story, explained his hopes and the futility of belligerent action on their part, and referred them to Haskell. Some accepted the news calmly; more grumbled, and a few threatened drastic measures to secure immediate payment. It did not look as though many could receive compensation through the *Record*. A reporter, whom Radbourne pressed into service for the collection of a few large accounts, returned with little money and information that in several cases Nowell had agreed to accept goods in payment for advertising, and promptly traded out the account. Diamond rings, gold headed canes, and jewelled opera glasses were a few of the presents he had lavished on himself at the expense of the company. It later developed that for several weeks he had paid his personal expenses, even his laundry bill, in the same way. By various signs he had anticipated departure. Whether inclusion of Norman and exclusion of himself from such plans should be taken as a compliment Radbourne was suddenly too busy to decide.

Late that day Scott called for Nowell on the telephone.

"He's not in the city," Radbourne explained.

"And Mr. Norman?"

"Away too."

"When will they return?"

It was a delicate situation, but Radbourne attacked it boldly.

"They have gone to San Francisco quite unexpectedly

to engage in business," he said. "In view of the fact that you are to assume control, if your people come in, they felt they ought to embrace the opening offered. I am Mr. Radbourne. I stayed with control of their stock, and full power for arrangements of transfer. Can't you come to Fordport to-day? I would like to talk the matter over with you."

"I'll come to-night, if I can. I'm not quite sure of my course yet."

"I hope he won't hear any stories before he arrives," Radbourne said as he turned from the telephone. His uncertainty was soon dissipated. Thornton appeared with dejection written large in face and manner.

"They've done it," he announced by way of greeting. "The beastly fools! I had things arranged to win."

"Who has done what?" Radbourne asked.

"They, Nowell and Norman. Their cowardly, senseless flight, discussed all over the city, to-day, ruins the chance for sale of the *Record*."

"I hope Scott hasn't heard about it."

"He has. You could trust the *Globe* people to reach him with such information without a moment's delay. They were afraid of him as a competitor."

"But he didn't know an hour ago, when he telephoned for Nowell. I explained as well as I could that he had gone to 'Frisco on business."

"That was only to confirm a rumor. He called me up later and told me he didn't want to be considered as a prospective purchaser. The flight of the paper's manager and editor made him suspect that something must have been misrepresented to him. Anyway, he

didn't think he could secure money on the face of it. He asked me to tell you."

"Then I suppose I may as well prepare to suspend. I'm glad I learned this before Yardsley spent more money here."

"Don't give up yet. I'll try to think of some other place where a buyer may be found. Hold on until I see you to-morrow morning."

When he departed Radbourne smiled. Thornton's schemes were too numerous to carry much weight. In his depression he managed to summon a bit of sympathy for Nowell, who had daily endured such trials for weeks.

His reflections were interrupted by Adams, a political reformer with whom he had been on intimate footing in his *Globe* days. Adams was a vigorous advocate of policies which had not put him in touch with the *Record*.

"I'm sorry to hear you have been cheated and deserted," he said, without preliminary remarks. "I suppose it is true that Nowell and Norman are gone with no intention of returning."

"Yes, that seems to be the case."

"Do you mind," Adams said with some hesitation, "if I inquire as a friend whether they carried away the paper's money, and whether you are obliged to suspend?"

"Not at all. Neither is correct."

"Good. Is the paper on the market?"

"Yes."

"Who controls a majority of stock?"

"I do, or can, if it seems desirable."

"If you can show me a controlling interest, I may be able to help you in a sale. It's something I would like

to do. I believe there is a field here for the sort of paper the *Record* promised to be, and failed to become. I have friends who share the belief, and I believe they could be induced to take over the property from you. They would have nothing to do with Nowell. You're well rid of him. When could you arrange to have the stock in hand?"

"By to-night, I think."

"Right. If you can come to my office at eight, I'll be there on other business. Keep up your courage. I'd like to see you win. And so would others."

Left to himself, Radbourne grimly readjusted his plans and prepared again to hope. But all depended upon Yardsley, who might grow skeptical with continued failures. It was time for him, if he was to call again during the day. His arrival was almost coincident with the *Record's* going to press. He waved a copy in his hand as he entered.

"It's all right, Radbourne!" he exclaimed with enthusiasm. "Best paper for a month. The pictures are great."

"The pictures" were a few stock cuts used to lighten the first page. Goodwin was a man of ingenuity in the arrangement of matter. He had managed with limited material to give the paper a metropolitan appearance. A few important European "exclusives," hashed from New York papers of the preceding day, and "specials" on fatalities, clipped from Western papers never used by the exchange editors of other Fordport dailies, aided materially in this effect.

"Heard from Scott?" Yardsley continued.

"He has flown."

"Do you mean he backs out?"

"Just that. In some way he heard to-day about the departure of Nowell and Norman and got frightened. Telephoned Thornton this afternoon that it was all off."

Yardsley glanced mournfully at the *Record* in his hand.

"The best paper you ever got out," he said. "And now you've got to give it all up."

"There's one more chance," Radbourne suggested tentatively.

"What is it?" There was encouraging eagerness in Yardsley's voice.

"A man who used to be quite a friend of mine called a little while ago, and said if I could show him stock control he thought he would be able to form a syndicate and buy the paper. I didn't know whether you'd want to pay expenses this week on such a prospect, or turn the stock over to me. But I told him I'd see him at eight this evening."

"Of course you will," Yardsley promptly agreed. "I'll stand this week's expense, as I promised to, and trust you to look out for me, if you sell. Send for Haskell, and I'll make the shares over to you now."

"You haven't asked who the man is. It's Adams."

"He's a temperance crank," Yardsley said, doubtfully. "Maybe he'd turn the *Record* against our crowd. Then the boys would all give me the laugh. But anyway I want to see the paper live. I won't stand in the way of its sale to any one with the price. Have Haskell come now, if he can. We'll get the business off our hands."

Radbourne found Haskell about to leave his office.

"I have to run down to New York," he said. "Will you want me long? And can it wait?"

"No, to both. Come on."

"Some one has threatened to sell your furniture, I suppose," the lawyer said as he hurried along.

"No. Scott slumped on us through panic over Nowell's flight. But I have a chance to sell, perhaps, to a man who first demands that I show him stock control. Yardsley wants to make over the shares he holds as attorney, so I can confer with my man to-night. It's Adams."

"He's a little windy. But he may have friends who want to buy experience. The transfer won't take long."

Within a half hour Radbourne found himself the possessor of *Record* stock to the amount of \$23,000. He controlled the company, but felt little elation from the fact. He met his appointment with Adams who seemed much pleased to find that the transfer had been accomplished.

"If I can form my company, we'll want you to remain," he said. "And we prefer to deal only with you. Objectionable elements in the company would have to be eliminated."

"I only care for Yardsley," Radbourne explained. "He has done a deal for us, and I couldn't take any action injurious to his interests."

"No, of course not. Always stick to your friends. Now give me an idea of the concern's condition and prospects."

For an hour Radbourne dealt with the affairs of the paper, and spoke with fluency surprising to himself. When he had finished, Adams seemed content.

"I think we can float you," he remarked, "with a little time to work. How long can you hold out?"

"This week."

"Well, that ought to be long enough to launch the syndicate, if it will form. I'm busy with another deal. But I'll take time for this."

Radbourne departed, feeling at last he had definite prospect of relief. But it seemed too good to be true, he occasionally reminded himself. Next morning he had two early callers, both from New York. One represented the firm which had supplied the *Record's* press; the other, a concern allowed to furnish type on credit. They had overdue notes, and desired to know why they had been dishonored. Also they would like to know Nowell's whereabouts. "The smooth Mr. Nowell," the type man called him.

"Gad," he said reflectively, "he was the only man who ever made me cut my prices and sell on credit. After he left, I congratulated myself that he hadn't taken my shop."

"I'm glad you came together," Radbourne said, "so I can talk to both of you at the same time. To begin with, Nowell has gone and won't return. He has resigned all connection with the company." Both men reached for their hats.

"Just a moment, please," Radbourne requested. They sat back, and he resumed:

"I'm now manager of the company and can give you an official statement, which I shall be glad to make as full as possible. Nowell did not abscond, and he now holds no stock in the company. So his absence has meager significance. All you care to know is what you

can get from the *Record*. Let me tell you its condition."

Concealing nothing, he traced its fortunes from the first day, and concluded with present prospects for disposal.

"The situation is this," he explained. "With the existing mortgage you can secure nothing, if you force suspension by attachments. On the other hand, a sale will yield, I think, enough to satisfy all creditors. I should regard your claims before looking for personal reimbursement for money invested here, some of it loans. If you leave my hands free for a reasonable period, smaller local creditors will follow suit. What will you do?"

"I'll give you a chance," the type agent promptly said. "It's for my interest. I only ask you to keep in touch with a lawyer I shall select."

"So will I," the press maker agreed after brief hesitation. "If Nowell was here, I'd put the screws on in a minute. But I don't want to hurt you, and it's poor policy to injure myself."

As the pair rose to go the type-maker expressed something which evidently had occupied his mind for several minutes.

"Aren't you rather young to tackle a job like this?" he asked. "You don't look thirty."

"Pretty fair guess," Radbourne returned with secret amusement. "But I guess I can go it, if I don't have too hard luck. It's been all that way so far."

"Keep your dander up," the man advised, as he headed for the door. "I like nerve."

Radbourne's next caller — he had become accustomed



to callers since Nowell departed — was more of a surprise than the two he closely followed. The name of Abraham Johnson was associated with a shady variety of ward politics and petty criminal practice. He was regarded by those who knew him as a politician who could not be relied upon to stay bought. Knowing him as a fellow employed by Colonel Robinson for work with which he did not care to soil his own hands, Radbourne doubly mistrusted his visitor's motives in calling.

"Good morning, Mr. Johnson," he said coldly and continued writing. Mr. Johnson occupied a chair uninvited and chewed his moustache as he gazed uneasily about.

"Are you busy now?" he inquired, when it seemed that Radbourne had forgotten his presence.

"Not more than usual. What can I do for you?" It was more a challenge than a question, and Johnson braced to meet it. He did not propose to be intimidated by a mere boy on the verge of bankruptcy.

"I want to ask who controls the *Record* now?" he said aggressively.

"With what object?"

"Well, certain parties I know of might want to buy the sheet."

"Then send them to me."

"So you have the swing, do you? Parties I represent will take your stock, if you control the thing, and give you five thousand for it. Suppose you'll take 'em up?"

"By no means."

"What! You won't get out when a chance is offered? You can't run this paper, and you know it. It's

bankrupt. A few days more will wipe it out. Don't be foolish when you've got a chance to stand from under."

"Whom do you represent?"

"I can't say, but the money is ready for you any time."

"You can tell Colonel Robinson," Radbourne said deliberately, "that the *Record* is not for sale to him. Also, that it is not on the verge of bankruptcy. Tell him I hope to do for the *Globe* all the *Record* has failed to accomplish thus far. I think that's all. Good-day."

Johnson's face crimsoned as he followed Radbourne's gesture towards the door. "Well, of all the fools," he muttered as he passed from hearing.

"He was nearer right than he knew," Radbourne said reflectively.

Though Yardsley had paid the salary roll and several other heavy items, numerous calls for money, some small and others large, necessitated constant effort to meet them. Thus far he had managed to do so, and the moral effect on staff and public was marked. While the *Globe* emissaries industriously circulated rumors of impending ruin, its failure to arrive added another to the paper's list of mysterious reprieves. People wondered what benign influence warded off bankruptcy. An able solicitor had fattened the paper's columns with a respectable quantity of profitable advertising, which came, in some instances, only through Nowell's severance of interest. He had deeply offended many of the city's merchants.

In the news end Goodwin did creditable work. And circulation increased. It seemed that the *Record* might

be self-supporting, if it could only hold out a few months. Once committed to the Democratic side of the municipal canvass, Radbourne had thrown himself vigorously into the campaign. In consequence his Republican friends at City Hall were inclined to treat him coldly. He was to feel their displeasure a little later. It occurred to him that during the next week the annual plum of ballot advertising would fall to the daily press. A few pages of sample ballots yielded twice as many dollars, quite useful, he reflected, to the *Record*. Kenton, the city clerk, had been a staunch friend in days when he haunted the City Hall for news. And through him the printing pap came.

Radbourne determined to act at once. Feeling sure of Kenton's friendship, he did not anticipate difficulty in securing the contract, though he knew machine Republicans would not hesitate to influence the clerk against him. Probably, he reasoned, they would have no time. Kenton was in his office when Radbourne reached the hall, and gave him cordial greeting.

"You haven't been neighborly of late," he observed. "What's kept you away?"

"Cares of state. But I've come to see you now."

"Anything confidential?"

"Yes."

"All right. Come into my private office."

"You haven't come to make a political alliance?" Kenton said jocosely, as the door closed behind them.

"No, I came to ask you if the *Record* is to have the printing of sample ballots given other papers. It has always gone to all the dailies, I know, regardless of

politics. But I thought it best to interview you regarding the matter, since we're a new concern. I don't mind telling you as a friend that we want it badly."

Kenton rubbed his nose reflectively.

"I don't know any reason against your having it," he said, finally. "You know that as a friend I am more than willing to help you. I'm glad you came up, for I send out plates to the papers to-night. To be honest, I hadn't really thought of the *Record*. I won't promise you positively, but I think it will be all right. I'll telephone you this afternoon, about four."

"I'm tremendously obliged," Radbourne said earnestly, "and you know if I can reciprocate, it will be a pleasure."

"That's right enough. You did things for me in the past. You'll hear from me at four."

As he left the clerk's office Radbourne passed the city treasurer. That worthy had been severely criticised in the *Record*, and his greeting was frigid.

Yardsley was waiting at the office with the weekly pay roll.

"I'm sorry to take this," Radbourne said, "but I've just closed an advertising contract, I think, which will partly reimburse you, if things go wrong."

"What's that?"

"The city ballot printing. Kenton talks as though he'd give it to us. I'm to have an answer to-day."

"You're the stuff," Yardsley remarked, with enthusiastic regard which had lately caused Radbourne embarrassment. "Why didn't Nowell do something like that? He was a pirate. If I could only get my hooks on him."

This was his favorite reference to the departed. And afterwards he would sit in silence, revolving the punishment to be inflicted.

"I guess I'll walk down to the shop," he said presently. "Perhaps those deputies have been prowling around again. They know they can't find anything; but they've laid my place waste three times in the last six months. If we only had a good Democratic administration and license! With business, I could raise enough money to keep the paper for ourselves. Do you think we've any chance in the election?"

"Possibly. The Republican candidate for mayor is a political novice with no personal following. And their ward tickets are unusually weak. The party is all cut up this fall with factional fights. If the Democrats play the game shrewdly, they may win by a narrow margin. I'm shouting as loudly as possible, and will continue if the *Record* is spared."

Kenton was better than his word. It was barely three when he telephoned.

"Come up to the office, if you can," he said. "I want to see you."

"All right. Be with you in a few minutes," Radbourne answered, reaching for his hat. He found the clerk awaiting his coming and followed him to the inner room.

"Got a check for me in advance?" he inquired jocularly.

"No," Kenton said with some embarrassment, and then paused. "Fact is, Radbourne, I don't know whether I can give you the ballots."

"But you practically promised me this morning."

"I know, and on that account I am going to say to you something I would otherwise keep to myself. You will regard it as confidential?"

"I'm not accustomed to abuse private information," Radbourne said sharply.

"I know that. I want you to understand that if you fail to receive the ballots it's through no ill will of mine. The printing is my gift, but I am a candidate for re-election with a hard fight on my hands. When you left this morning Smith, the city treasurer, saw you and guessed your errand. A few minutes later he came in with the mayor, the city auditor, and the president of the council, practically to demand that I give no city printing to the *Record*. They said it is only a campaign sheet for the opposition, and not entitled to consideration as an established journal. I know they are huffy on account of the way in which you have banged the machine. But not one of them will help me, if I help you. And I need the office, Radbourne, for I'm not well-fixed financially. What can I do about it?"

It seemed to Radbourne that Kenton's appeal left him but one course.

"I hate to miss the snap," he said finally, "for I need the money. But after your statement of the case I can't demand that you give it to me. I don't want to be the means of your defeat, if a Republican government is retained. You must remember the possibility of Democratic success."

"Yes," Kenton admitted with a smile, "a possibility. You've stated it correctly. But seriously, you may not appreciate how much your consideration in this matter means to me. If I fall out with the City Hall crowd,

I'm dished. Is there anything I can do for you privately? A loan perhaps?"

"No thanks, I haven't reached the touching stage."

"All right. You're welcome any time. Of course," with sudden apprehension, "you won't mention this in the paper?"

"You shan't be dragged in in any way."

"Thanks. Smoke?"

"That's all my plans amount to — just smoke," Radbourne soliloquized, as he left the hall. "But Adams, I guess, will pull me out all right. He's different from the others. When I see him to-night, I hope he'll give me some good news for Yardsley. He's a trump."

There was no urgent need for his presence at the office, and he decided to try his luck at advertising, a field for which he felt himself poorly fitted. At a hazard he selected a dry-goods house frequently referred to by Nowell when he desired to lavish expletives on the pride of Fordport merchants. He was referred, with a covert chuckle, to the head of the firm, a crabbed-looking old man writing busily at a large desk littered with samples. He glanced at Radbourne's card without comment and continued writing.

"Where is Mr. Nowell?" he finally inquired without looking up from his work.

"Gone."

"Where?"

"I don't know."

"Who has taken his place?"

"I have."

"Well, the *Record* is lucky. He was an independent crook. What do you want?"

"Some of your advertising."

The old man turned in his chair and gazed at Radbourne keenly.

"You must know I told Nowell our name would never appear in the *Record*," he said tartly.

"I know, but that ought not to hold against a new management with new methods," Radbourne urged.

"What can you do for us? What's your circulation?"

"About ten thousand."

"Nowell said you had twenty."

"I'm giving you facts. As to quality, I think the fact that we largely circulate among middle class people ought to make us valuable for a department store like yours."

"Perhaps. What are the paper's principles now?"

"Independent, with strong probability that it will soon become Democratic."

A slight smile hovered about the merchant's mouth.

"I see plainly you're not an experienced solicitor," he said. "You tell too much truth. I don't mind saying that you have improved the *Record* during the last fortnight. Experimentally, I think, you shall have a page to-morrow, and more if it proves satisfactory. Tell Mr. Ayres I sent you to him for copy; the same he gives the *Globe*."

Allowing no opening for thanks Radbourne would have uttered, he turned to his desk as though no caller had interrupted. Five minutes later Radbourne was on his way with a page advertisement in his hand, and a brighter vision of society.

He was in a mood to expect good tidings from Adams



who appeared punctually, and plunged into the subject at hand with his usual directness.

"Have you mentioned my possible interest in the *Record* to any one outside?" he asked, as he removed his overcoat and hat.

"Certainly not," Radbourne said promptly. "Not to any one beside the two who had to know on account of my receiving a controlling interest."

"I thought so. But I don't see what else Lewis meant when I met him on the street this afternoon. He asked if I was to become a newspaper magnate. Of course I treated the question as a joke."

"If he has a tip, I don't know how he got it. How have you made out with the syndicate?"

"Not very well," — with a deprecatory gesture. "Not so well as I expected. Two of the men I saw did all I hoped, but others failed to respond. They wanted a large guarantee fund before they invested anything. But I haven't really had leisure for the canvass I wanted to make. Some business in which I have tied up most of my available means keeps me busy running about the state. So I am unable to give your matter the time I need for it. Can't you wait a few weeks? With a chance to work it properly, I'm sure I can finance the business. What do you think about it?"

Radbourne delayed reply. Since he had told the paper's condition minutely in a previous interview with Adams, and explained the fact that it was daily dependant on the uncertain charity of Yardsley, he knew the question merely softened refusal to undertake its redemption, at least for the present. He saw every plan frustrated and ruin replacing safety. With bankruptcy

he would be blamed as the paper's representative for the accumulated obligations of Nowell and Norman, and saddled with responsibility for questionable transactions of which he knew nothing at the time of their taking place. He suddenly felt that the world of comfort and success had receded, leaving him a pariah. But he mastered the situation by a sudden concentration of will.

"I don't quite know what to say," he answered calmly. "I expected you to take hold of the matter, and have abandoned other plans in consequence. I prefer you to any unknown purchaser, but I can't, of course, be idle in the matter. If I don't sell before you are ready to consider the paper in earnest, I'll give you an option. Is that satisfactory?"

"Perfectly," Adams hastened to answer. His face expressed something which may have been relief and certainly held surprise. "I want to do this, and I want you with us, Radbourne, if I can compass it. I regard you as a valuable young man, if you will pardon a personal remark."

"Certainly," Radbourne remarked as he followed his caller to the street. "We like to hear such things occasionally, even when we know they are undeserved."

"Not so in this case. I'll see you soon. Good night."

In aimless fashion Radbourne began to wander through the plant. The long, dark composing-room, with its seeming confusion of type and forms dimly outlined by a single incandescent eye. And the pressroom where the steel deity loomed silent in the gloom, all seemed detached from his life, as though already the possession of another. He switched off the lights that

flooded the business office with a sudden impression that the world beheld his defeat. Then he returned to his private office, still ornate with the lavish furnishings Nowell had installed, and lapsed into dull meditation. He tried to speculate on the future, but could not concentrate. He was only sure he would leave Fordport and locate in some city where the *Record* was unknown.

In this frame of mind Haskell found him, as he followed a dim ray of light caught in passing.

"What's the matter?" he asked from the doorway. "You look as if you'd lost a jackpot on four aces."

"Worse than that," Radbourne said heavily. "I've lost the *Record*."

Haskell whistled softly and shifted his cigar.

"But I thought Adams was to pull it out of the mire. Wasn't that the idea on which I executed a transfer of the controlling interest to you?"

"It was, but it isn't. Adams has flunked like the others."

"The devil!" Haskell tapped his boot reflectively, and regarded Radbourne with more than professional interest. "Don't get broken up," he said. "Tell me about it."

Without comment Radbourne rehearsed a brief interview.

"I haven't the remotest idea about the reason for his sudden change of front," he said in conclusion. "I guess it's just a part of the hoodoo that has followed the *Record* from the start. Sometimes I feel almost inclined to condone Nowell's action in cutting loose from it all."

"Don't waste sympathy on him. He was a rolling stone, anyway. I've a fancy regarding Adam's desertion, and it satisfies me."

"What is it?" Radbourne asked, with incredulous interest.

"The same old story. Our friend, the Colonel."

"Bosh! Adams dislikes him. Any effort of his to balk the deal would only make Adams keener to put it through."

"Granted on general principles. But all rules have exceptions, and Adams is not above human temptation. I happen to know that his telephone company is about to go before the city government for privileges overlooked years ago, and now essential to its success here. The Colonel's amiable son is chairman of the aldermanic board, and can control enough votes to hold up the franchise. Adams's remark about Lewis shows that the *Globe* people have got wind of his possible alliance with you. You may be sure conversation did not end with the remarks quoted. I gamble that the Colonel put on the political screws, and convinced Adams that first aid to the injured should be at home. He withdrew in obedience to a hint."

"Perhaps you're right. But I would have banked on his friendship."

"Well, he may be all right. But he naturally thinks his first duty is to himself. The question is our course under present circumstances."

"I tell you," Radbourne said with sudden life in his voice, "I'm going to make this a lively week for the Republican ring. This is Monday, and election comes Friday. In the next three days I'll express some things a

good many people in Fordport know about, but never utter aloud. And I'm going to elect a Democratic mayor."

Haskell regarded him with kindly amusement.

"You dream, James," he said commiseratingly. "But I'd rather you'd meet the situation in this way. A vigorous death is better than meek cessation of breath. You're entitled to all the fun available in three days of grace left. Of course, you can't beat the Republican ticket. But a little scraping of whitewash will afford many amusement. Go ahead. I'm going to the club now. Send for me when you need anything. Bye!"

Radbourne brooded, suddenly too weary for physical exertion or constructive thought. He felt a great need of comfort; of the sympathy and advice of one to whom his welfare might be more than the casual interest of a busy day. Miladi would have healing tenderness and wisdom for one she loved. He wondered why memories of her came before him in hours of despondency, his times of lowered shield.

He heard a clock strike twelve. And he heard another noise, slight and near. It seemed a sound of muffled sobbing. Surely he detected some one moving outside the partly opened office door. Suddenly alert, he moved to investigate, and paused in astonishment. In a slight form shrinking against a desk in a heavily shaded corner he recognized his stenographer, inherited from Nowell.

"Why, Frances," he said, "what's the matter?" She did not answer, and he spoke again:

"What are you doing here?"

Still no answer, and he put a hand on her shoulder,

guiding her into his office. In the light he had ocular evidence of her distress. She was slight and pretty, with hair of a chestnut shade and hazel eyes, now reddened in weeping. And there were other signs of disturbance: a torn sleeve, and a rent in her waist, showing the white of a youthful shoulder.

"Sit down," he said, "and tell me what has happened."

"Oh, I can't," she murmured. Her look was desperate, and she stood near the door, with something in her attitude suggesting one poised for flight.

"Yes, you can. What has some one done to you?" he persisted. "Tell me."

"I was going home," she said at last, with a nervous catching of breath, "and a man followed, and nabbed me. But I got away from him. And when I saw the light I came in here."

Tears flowed afresh, and she trembled violently.

"Don't cry," he said, and drew her head against his shoulder protectively. "It's all right now. I'll take you safe home."

"Will you?" said a truculent voice at his elbow. He turned to confront Mullens, a burly policeman of the beat. "What does this mean?" the officer continued aggressively.

"You'd better explain yourself," said Radbourne in sudden anger.

"You'll explain," the officer asserted, and levelled a menacing forefinger. He shook it impressively as he rehearsed his charge. "My attention is called to this place by a disturbance. I find the door open, and follow a light. Then what do I find? You, and my niece Frances in this condition. Pretty reformer you are."

"Oh, your 'niece Frances,'" Radbourne echoed. "What does this mean?" he said to the girl sharply, under the spur of sudden suspicion.

"She'll tell it to a judge," interjected the policeman. From his voice he could not altogether exclude triumph. "And I'll be looking after her now."

In their sharp colloquy the girl had stood silent, twisting her handkerchief nervously. Now she spoke with sudden resolution:

"I won't do it, Uncle Michael."

"What!" he bellowed. "You've got to."

"I won't," she reiterated desperately. Then she turned to Radbourne, her words poured forth as if to forestall loss of courage.

"Please forgive me. They made me do it, and said they only meant to frighten you. But I can't do it. Not if they beat me, as Uncle Michael threatened. You've been good to me. I'm so ashamed and sorry."

"I'm sorry too," Radbourne said, as she droopingly turned to go. "For I trusted you. Perhaps you," he shot at the red-faced, mumbling officer, "can tell me whether I owe this compliment to the chief of police. It wasn't your own brilliant invention, was it?"

"You'll find out," remarked the retreating policeman with unintentional accuracy.

"Apparently, they don't consider me finished yet," mused Radbourne with a rueful smile. "So why," with sudden energy, "should I count myself out."

He closed his desk briskly and stepped into the dimly lighted, almost empty street. As he went striding up town his mind was already busy with a plan to smoke out the allied county ring and City Hall gang.

## CHAPTER XXI

Early next morning Radbourne presented himself at Thornton's bachelor apartments. The Democratic chief was at breakfast and invited him to join in the meal.

"Thanks," Radbourne said, "I came over to breakfast with you. Rather cheeky, but I had to see you early to-day."

"In what capacity?"

"Guardian angel, if you like. You told me, a few weeks ago, you had proof that the chief of police and sheriff's deputies are taking bribes to allow certain favored saloons the privilege of sales in dry times. But you said it was of little value, since the *Times*, your only party organ in the city, feared even to hint things grazing the province of libel. I want to say that I am ready to print those charges in the strongest possible style, and play them up with anything else rotten in the Republican administration, as ante-election cards."

Thornton pushed his plate away and stared at his guest in astonishment.

"This would be a great boost for us in the campaign," he said. "But do you realize what it might do to the *Record*?"

"Perfectly."

"How about your deal with Adams and the Citizens? You must excuse my mention of a matter I presumably know nothing about. But I heard of it yesterday. He



and his assistants are Republicans, you know, and they wouldn't endorse such an onslaught."

"They've nothing to do with the matter. Adams isn't a possible purchaser."

"I'm sorry, for I thought he could get you the necessary money. Then what is your course to be now?"

"Just what I have indicated to you. Republican office-holders, or their friends, have been in every check sustained in my efforts to save the *Record*. They seem to have placed me in a position where publication after this week is impossible. So I propose to show them up. I can help you; maybe pull a part of your ticket through. For I don't fear a dozen libel suits. There is nothing to satisfy executions."

"Come to my office," Thornton said, as he rose quickly, "and get your ammunition. If you use the bribery story to-night, I'll furnish you the money for an extra edition of fifteen thousand, and circulate it. This is better fortune than I had hoped for."

Half an hour later Radbourne had a bundle of affidavits that both police and sheriffs were accepting hush money from questionable resorts. They were from keepers of unfavored dens, it was true, and not likely to weigh heavily in court, even against the word of police authorities. But they supplied sufficient color to justify charges.

"What can you give me for to-morrow?" he inquired of Thornton, as he rose to go.

"I can give you a tip on some corruption in the city treasurer's office. Smith has discriminated against several banks in favor of one which furnishes his bond gratis, and has accommodated him, I am told, with heavy

loans on private deals. A Republican member of the council told me confidentially that a quarter of a million has been allowed to lie without interest in this bank for several months. There was a move for investigation by the city government. But it was headed off by a strong Republican majority, which referred the question to the committee on finance. Other banks are sore about the matter, and I'm sure I can obtain the essential facts from some of their officials."

"But you may not be able to use it, Radbourne. If you run the police affair to-night as strongly as you promise, the City Hall crowd may try to force suspension of the paper now."

"Have it ready," Radbourne said grimly. "There is no way for them to stop me this week. I have supplies and propose to play the game to the limit. Your extra fifteen thousand will be ready for you."

When the first *Record* was laid on his desk for approval that afternoon, he regarded it with satisfaction. Black face heads sprawled across the first page:

HONEYCOMBED WITH VICE  
POLICE AND SHERIFFS ACCEPT BRIBES  
FROM HOUSES OF ILL FAME  
AFFIDAVITS SHOW PAYMENT OF TRIBUTE

In double column the news story followed with all the embellishments of Goodwin's art. On the editorial page the charges were repeated with the unction of editorial "we." In scathing terms the hypocrisy of Republican officials was denounced; the Republican press was castigated for its tacit support, and the people were

called to rally about the Democratic banner to purify municipal politics.

In the middle of the editorial page was boxed a statement that the federal statute forbidding representation of any U. S. coin on advertising devices was being flagrantly disregarded in Fordport. Federal officials were exhorted to take cognizance of this fact. Radbourne read this with a vision of handsome delivery wagons placed on the street by the *Globe*. On the side of each was a large likeness of a penny.

"All right, Ward," he told the foreman who stood at his elbow. "Let her go."

Presently he heard the press and settled back in his chair with a feeling more like content than anything experienced for weeks. The newsboys' chorus, augmented by the special corps employed to distribute for Democracy, swelled and died away, and all the staff departed. Still he waited.

The telephone rang, and he took up the receiver.

"Yes," he called placidly. An answering roar caused him involuntarily to draw away from the 'phone. He knew the voice of the sheriff, a little pseudo-clergyman with a bullying bass, which caused many to regard him as a man of force. The candidate of an insignificant faction, his nomination had resulted from a fight between two more important men. Once on the Republican ticket, his election was easy. The saintly pretence of his administration had disarmed suspicion usual with incumbents of the office.

"Is the manager in?" he bawled.

"You have him."

"What do you mean by that lie?"

"I don't understand you."

"That lie about my deputies."

"Just what we say. Didn't we make our meaning plain?"

"It's an outrage. I never heard of such a thing."

"Didn't you? Then, of course, you will purify your office."

Smothered language unbecoming to a clergyman. Then the sheriff returned to the charge.

"Will you apologize to-morrow?"

"No. But I'll tell you what we will do."

"Well?"

"We'll repeat the charge and try to find fresh evidence."

"I'll sue you for libel," the sheriff shouted in a tremendous voice.

"Very well."

"And I'll have you indicted for criminal libel."

"All right."

"I'll see that you're tied up so you can't abuse other people."

"Very well. Oh, Mr. Sheriff, do you conduct services in the jail chapel next Sunday?"

There was no answer and Radbourne replaced the receiver with a sigh of content.

"After three months of crow that was good," he mused as he glanced at the clock. "Seven o'clock. The returns are not all in, so I think I'll postpone eating."

His next interruption was a caller, Mayor Brown. The mayor was a stout, middle-aged gentleman, whose rubicund face failed to convey any suggestion of his undoubted capacity in business. As a public speaker he

was in the kindergarten. And in conversation he was a lumbering failure. Financial affiliation with powerful men in his party had led to his nomination as a compromise candidate, warranted to do no harm. He had pleased political makers by confining his attention to routine business.

"I saw a light in the window and came in," he said superfluously.

"Yes," Radbourne assented. "Have a cigar."

Certain things in his Honor's manner seemed to indicate that his errand was not purely social. But he lighted the proffered cigar, and crossed his bulky legs, while his right hand toyed with a massive watch chain. He thrust his left into his trousers pocket, and found repose.

"You haven't been in the office lately," he hazarded after a few puffs.

"No, I've been busy here." Radbourne was not nursing the conversation.

"That reminds me. You are managing the *Record* now?"

"Yes."

"Well, I wanted to ask you about a piece I saw in to-night's issue. About the police and my administration."

"What was wrong in it?"

"Well, there may be something wrong in the department. I'm too busy to follow it closely. But why was I mentioned as a party to it?"

"You are the head of the police department, constituted so by the city charter. If the chief or his subordinates are corrupt, it is your duty to punish them,

by removal if necessary. Failing to do so, you become an accessory to their acts."

His Honor wriggled, and tried another tack.

"There was another thing, too," he continued. "Editorially, you said we had kept the other papers silent with pap, and intimated that an effort to bully the *Record* had been made."

"I think so."

The mayor bristled. Here was his cue. He felt sure on that point Radbourne was without proof.

"I don't know what you mean," he asserted, with an effort at dignity.

Radbourne smiled irritatingly.

"Let me refresh your memory," he volunteered. "Do you remember an occasion when with other city officials you visited the city clerk, who didn't tell me the story, and ordered him not to give the *Record* city printing, since it was 'only a campaign sheet'?"

"So that's the matter," said the mayor, blushing and twiddling his thumbs. "Well, we'll fix that all right. The ballots are gone. What else do you want?"

"Only a Democratic victory at the polls next Friday. To that end I shall do as much as possible."

The mayor's face took on extra carmine as he rose suddenly.

"We'll stop you before election," he threatened. "You shot your bolt too soon."

"Maybe. But then we've got more to come, you know."

Astonishment and alarm flitted across his Honor's face. So slight was his knowledge of various depart-

ments he could not guess what point might be attacked next.

"More," he echoed. "Where?"

"You will learn in due time," Radbourne said, deliberately.

"See here, Radbourne, I always liked you, and we used to be friendly. I wouldn't have had anything to do with the ballot business, if the boys hadn't insisted it was necessary to keep the other papers in line. It's safe to guess you're near the end of your rope here. Now, if you'll promise to let up on the reform howl, just drop it easy like, I'll guarantee you as much money as you invested here. I know where I can get it. Is it a bargain?"

With a turn of his wrist Radbourne switched off all lights except one directly overhead. Then he reached for his overcoat.

"You don't know me well enough to avoid such a proposition," he said. "I shall bare all discoverable rottenness in the city government, regardless of persons affected."

"Then be damned!" the mayor ejaculated as he turned away. The street door closed with a bang, and Radbourne stood for a moment in meditation.

"Five thousand is a good deal for a pauper to throw away. But I promised to support the Democracy, and I'll do it. I may pull them through, though that's unlikely. Anyhow, I'll eat now, while I have the price."

On his way he met O'Hara, a *Globe* reporter, who stopped with a cheerful grin.

"Say, but you basted the City Hall gang to-night,"

he said, appreciatively. "And your observation on advertising carts was pat."

"Did it work?"

"Almost as soon as the *Record* reached our office the Colonel made the telephone warm. To-night's *Globes* were delivered from express carts. The boys were tickled. We'd like to see you win out. And if you don't, you won't forget to look us up, will you?"

"Thanks. You know I appreciate it," Radbourne said with warmth.

"All right," briskly. "Due at a meeting in five minutes. Good night."

In a modest restaurant Radbourne ate his supper and pondered. When he had finished, he sought Thornton's apartment.

"Mr. Thornton is out," the maid said in response to his inquiry.

"When will he return?"

"I can't tell. He left word that he didn't know when he would be home."

"I'll wait for him, if I may. I want to see him on important business."

"Very well, sir. Will you come this way?"

Radbourne found himself installed in a red plush chair, a solitary watcher. He looked at his watch and saw it was shortly after nine o'clock. If Thornton was attending a political council, he would not return for an hour or two, at least. A casual search for something readable disclosed only a Thornton genealogy and a volume of quotations. Thornton's books were elsewhere. So Radbourne came to rumination, reviewing the *Record's* disastrous history, its present peril, and his own



rather gloomy prospects. They did not seem so dreary now. For he was tired to the point of dullness. He was awakened by a slam of the front door. Before he fairly collected his faculties Thornton entered the room.

"Hullo!" he called in surprise. "That you, Radbourne? How long have you been here?"

"Don't know. I must have dozed a little. What time is it?"

"Eleven o'clock."

"Then I dozed more than a little. I came about nine. The girl didn't know when you would return, but I waited on a chance. I needed to see you to-night."

"Sorry to have kept you waiting so long. We had a final pow-wow of the city committee, and put a few finishing touches on the campaign. Do you know, Radbourne, I think Collins has a fighting chance to win over Brown. The normal Republican majority is a thousand. But last year Brown only licked Collins by two hundred. And he's been weakened during his administration, while Collins has grown stronger. Ward workers report Democratic enthusiasms and Republican disaffection all along the line. Brown made an ass of himself in the third ward last night. In talking down to its horny-handed voters he threw it into the corporations, especially the water and gas companies, so hard they really think he means it, and are going to hold up their contributions. By the way, every one is talking about the drubbing you gave the City Hall gang. It was a corker, and ought to change a hundred votes in kid glove districts where we are weak. Do you want that treasurer matter for to-morrow?"

"I came to see you about that. Since we went to press to-night I've been threatened with ruin by the sheriff and mayor, and offered a bribe by one. Day after to-morrow is election day, and it would mightily please the Republican machine to shut me off from a last appeal to the people. They may try to stop publication by an attachment on the machinery. I want to forestall them."

"How?"

"By going to press to-morrow with an extra edition at noon. I want to know if you have collected data on the treasurer's irregularities."

"It's in my library desk. I'll get it for you. The extra is a bully idea. Can you give us ten thousand on it?"

"Yes. Have your men ready by noon. If you'll give me the data, I'll go now. I'm dead tired."

"I think you'll find a detailed statement of all I mentioned the other day," Thornton said as he returned with a package of papers. "If it isn't all plain, call me up in the morning. I'm sorry to see you so played out. Isn't there a chance of Yardsley's supporting you a little while longer?"

"I don't think so. I haven't asked him to. I can't either. He knows Adams slipped from under and feels almost as badly as I do about it. I haven't seen him for a couple of days. When he last called, he said he was off to attend a meeting of his directors and transact some business in New York."

"It's a shame for the paper to die after rendering the party such service. I've told the moneyed men so, but

they seem indifferent. My personal thanks isn't much to give you, but it's my best."

"Don't bother about that," Radbourne said listlessly, as he slowly pulled on his gloves. "I don't claim a deal of credit. If I can force your candidate through, I shall feel that the *Record* has yielded me some pleasure. Just remember to have your men on hand at twelve tomorrow. Good night."

Once in his room he hastily undressed and dropped into bed without examining Thornton's papers. The demands of nature took precedence over voluntary interests. His next conscious act was sleepy rubbing of his eyes in a dazed effort to comprehend some sound. A voice repeated his name, with a rapping accompaniment on his door.

"What is it?" he called confusedly.

"Nine o'clock. I thought you must have overslept," his landlady responded.

"Thanks. I did," he answered with a hasty quickening of his mind. Nine o'clock and this the day for launching the last reform thunderbolt. An early edition, only three hours later! No one in the office knew his plans, and arrangements must be perfected in season. He revolved the situation as he dressed with feverish haste and rushed from the house. A taxi was passing and he hailed it.

"Drive like the devil to the *Record* office," he commanded as the door slammed behind him.

In his office Goodwin was smoking with the placidity of an editor who has assigned his staff and knows of no chance by which his plans may be disturbed. He

regarded Radbourne's unkempt appearance with skeptical eye.

"Just finishing up the night?" he inquired casually.

"Worse than that. I'm hardly awake, and hadn't time to bother with my toilet before coming down. How are things going?"

"All right. We'll go to press as scheduled, I guess."

"We must get an extra out at noon. I know this is short notice," he continued hurriedly, "but I didn't decide on it until late last night. Then I promised the Democratic city committee ten thousand for distribution at one to-day. I've an exposé in the city treasurer's office, and want to push it as a last campaign card. I have reason to believe the Republican ring will try to bother us to-day. With the extra we steal a march on them. Are you equal to it?"

"We'll have to do it somehow. I'll fill up with standing miscellany, pictures and plate matter, and instruct the boys to hustle for early news. What sort of a story have you for a big leader?"

"I don't know, for I haven't looked at the data. I was too tired last night. Thornton outlined a story that would be a hummer. It swats the city treasurer, one of the saintly pillars of the G. O. P. I'll begin now and give you the story in takes. Keep the office boy handy for copy, and send in the names of people who want to see me. I can't stop for any one unless it's imperative."

Five minutes later he was scanning Thornton's offering. It pointed to a line of action he quickly decided to adopt, a series of personal questions which had the effect of pointed charges. The urgent need of the occa-

sion stimulated him to unusual effort. The boy carried away sheets of copy with frequency which caused Goodwin to rub his hands with satisfaction.

"Radbourne wastes talent in starving here for himself," he remarked to the city editor. "He might as well be getting his hundred a week in New York."

With the treasurer's story finished Radbourne editorially reviewed his charges against the sheriffs and police, and gave them added emphasis. All enumerated evils he classed together as the fruit of a protected Republican ring, only to be purified by ejection from office. He charged it with muzzling the city's press, save the *Record*.

"A little demagogic, but it will appeal to the low-brows," he soliloquized as he completed revision of the last paragraph. "Eleven-forty, and I've had nothing to eat to-day. I'll fortify myself with that luncheon the boy brought in."

His repast was interrupted by Goodwin. The editor's pleasure was manifest.

"Fortune played into our hands to-day," he said in a tone of satisfaction. "A suicide and murder in the Brown family came off an hour ago, and two of the boys are rushing a presentable story into shape. It's the local story of the month and we'll clean the *Globe* out on it, even if they conclude to issue an extra. We had the Brown house in the 'graveyard,' and fished out a couple of cuts that will do for the dead ones. With your political story it will make a hot issue. We'll show them a little life."

"Good. Hustle the composing-room and try to have

the press in motion by twelve sharp. I'm going over to Haskell's and shall return by that time."

Haskell was dictating when he reached his office.

"Have they ousted you?" he inquired facetiously.

"No, but they threaten to, and I'd like to have you there for an hour or two to assist in repelling invaders."

"I'm not surprised at your need of me. That was an awful roast you handed the sheriff and police last night."

"To-day is to be worse. The city treasurer takes his turn in the pillory. These things go out in a special edition with a murder and suicide in the Brown family. At noon it will be on the street."

"You'll do, Rad," Haskell said approvingly. "You ought to win somehow. I'll spare you an hour or two as master of ceremonies with pleasure."

When they reached the *Record* office the press was grinding busily, and newsboys were already on the street with clamorous cries. The double bill of private and civic criminality was popular. It seemed as if every citizen purchased a copy. In the midst of the bustle incident to distribution, the mayor appeared. With him was "Jack the Catcher." Plainly astonished, the mayor examined his watch as though fearing it had played him a scurvy trick in running down. But it ticked as usual and his look of wonder deepened.

"What time do you go to press?" he blurted.

"We went to press at twelve," Radbourne answered blandly.

"But the press is still working. I hear it. And I'm going to stop it."

"Did I understand you?" Haskell inquired with well feigned amazement.

"I'm going to stop it. I'm a creditor now, and unless you have the cash to pay my bill right here, I've got to attach the press."

"May I examine your claim?" Radbourne inquired.

"Yes, I see you have a furniture dealer's bill for a hundred dollars. Very sorry, but we're a little short of money to-day. Some other time."

"Right now, or I'll attach the press," the mayor declared with emphasis. "Why should I, or any other creditor, let you run on and throw mud at honest men?"

"Permit me to offer you a copy of to-day's issue," said Radbourne hospitably. With undisguised eagerness his Honor grasped the paper. For a moment his eyes rested on the glaring headlines. Then he trampled upon them. Once or twice his voice refused to respond in efforts to speak. Then he addressed "Jack" with dignity:

"Attach the press and stop it."

"One moment," Haskell interrupted. "I suppose you know your danger in thus interrupting our business. I tell you frankly that I don't think your claim justifies you legally in doing it. We shall hold you responsible for any damage sustained through such action."

"I'm responsible, and not wholly ignorant of law," his Honor replied. "Constable, serve your precept."

With deprecatory look "Jack" passed on through the composing-room, where he was shown the stairs leading down to the press-room. At their bottom was a locked door which resisted his utmost efforts. He shouted for

those inside to open. No response came through the coughing and rattling of the press. He returned to the office, where Radbourne was playing pedro with Haskell. This conduct was a grievous disappointment to the mayor. He seemed to feel that he was defrauded of lawful satisfaction.

"I shall have to ask you for a key to the pressroom," the constable said, with a blend of deference and command.

"Can't you get in?" Radbourne asked. "I haven't the key. You'll have to get it through the pressman. And he's quite deaf, I'm sorry to say. I doubt whether you can reach his ear before he runs off the edition."

The mayor danced with rage.

"We'll break the door down," he shouted. "The trick won't work. Come constable, get an axe."

When they had gone, Radbourne turned to the office telephone and called up the pressroom.

"How much longer to finish the edition?" he asked after the pressman's stentorian, "Hullo!"

"Just getting through. I've run off 15,000."

"All right. Unlock the door and don't resist an officer if he wants to monkey round the press."

Presently his Honor reappeared, bearing a shining axe.

"Are you willing to let me in there now?" he asked.

"I don't think you'll have any difficulty," Radbourne said coolly. "I investigated just now and found the door unlocked. You may approach the press safely. It's stopped for a while, unless you want us to run off some extras for distribution."

"Very well," the mayor said with an air of triumph,



depositing his axe in a corner. "Constable, do your duty."

"By the way," said Haskell casually, "I intended to tell you before that your writ of attachment is defective. It's dated a day ahead of time, so you have really no excuse for such riotous conduct. If you use the axe, I shall have to call for police protection. Just glance at your writ."

His Honor glanced, and swore.

"A fool clerk saved you to-day," he said threateningly, "but you won't get off so easily to-morrow."

"Let me advise you," Haskell said as he retreated rapidly, "to leave such matters to your attorney and forego the satisfaction of personal service."

"I suppose he'll hit me for keeps to-morrow," Radbourne observed.

"I think not," Haskell answered. "Election day is a legal holiday. I don't see anything to prevent your living out the brief period on which your heart is set. Let me advise you to close the office and disappear until to-morrow. Your friend, the sheriff, hasn't shown his hand to-day, and might nullify all the good work we did with the mayor. You're the only one they can serve a process on. Keep low. That's all I can do for you to-day, so I'll go back to work."

Radbourne "kept low." He appreciated the wisdom of the policy when he reached his rooms in the early evening, and was informed that the sheriff had called twice to see him on "particular business."

At the office early next morning, he began arrangements for securing election returns from each voting precinct. With these completed he threw himself into

the contest which would be a personal triumph in the event of Democratic victory, though it failed to save the *Record*. After a half hour's canvass of his force he had the satisfaction of seeing a dozen or more headed for the polls with Collins ballots in their pockets. And he was reasonably sure they would be used. Then, he canvassed a list of friends who had a habit of neglecting to vote, and tallied five more.

Early in the day it was evident the election would be desperately fought with Collins having a fair chance to win. The Republicans were somewhat dismayed by their discovery that the corporations were doing little for Brown. Their laborers exhibited surprising independence and met threats of report to headquarters with a statement that they were tipped to do as they pleased.

In the eleventh hour the executives of the mayor's railroad had decided that another mayor would be more useful to them. During his incumbency they had failed to obtain anything of value from the city, even when a request was legitimate, on account of the popular cry of "steal" invariably raised. They could work more effectively with hidden strings. This fact and a call on Collins caused them to take a neutral attitude in the campaign, and give their hirelings free rein. In many cases this unusual liberty was sure to be used against a candidate connected with the road, merely through thirst for variety.

These votes, with those controlled by the license club, turned the tide against the mayor in down-town wards. In the residential section, too, he was losing somewhat through the *Record* charges, brought too late for effective denial. To balance such losses the Republican managers

worked desperately in suburban wards, strongly Republican and largely benefited by public improvements during the past year. It was generally conceded that the council would again be Republican. All interest centered in the mayoralty, with its associate issue of license.

Partisan feeling ran high and the police were busily employed, quelling incipient riots and arresting citizens drunk with the price of their votes. Radbourne voted in Treasurer Libby's ward and happened to cast his ballot while that official was in the ward room. He nodded to a stony stare accompanied by audible comments on the defects of "carpet scribblers." Outside he met Mayor Brown in his machine from which he was canvassing the polling places. The mayor was too much agitated even to see him.

Canvasses for both parties through the day showed a neck-and-neck race in which each at times claimed the lead. The ballots piled in until each nook and cranny had been ransacked for voters, and some who were not. If their sponsors were sufficiently astute, the latter voted. When the polls closed at six o'clock it was known that the heaviest vote in Fordport's history had been cast.

Political heelers remained at the polling places to watch the count. But the general public packed the streets in the vicinity of newspaper offices, awaiting bulletin returns. Radbourne saw that his service was in proper order, and employed a stereoptican operator to amuse the crowd. With melancholy pride he resolved that the *Record* should die in the midst of apparent vigor.

It was nearly nine when the First ward reported. Collins 802 and Brown 830. This was encouraging, for One was usually good for a hundred or more Republican

majority. Brown had carried it in the last election by eighty. Presently, ward Two, classed as doubtful, returned Brown 733, Collins 752. Here the Democratic ticket had gained two hundred over its last known strength. Ward Six was next in line. A "kid glove" section, it always ranged itself for the G. O. P., which contained the bulk of the city's wealth. The Democratic leaders had worked strenuously with the hope of paring Brown's strength. But he held it fairly well with 250 majority in the ward.

Ward Three, styled the "Battleaxe," gave the Collins men a disagreeable surprise. A Democratic stronghold yielded Brown twenty over Collins.

"How do you account for it?" Radbourne asked Thornton.

"More Brown money than we could cover. Usually the Republicans don't think it necessary to tempt them, and they indulge their conscience. We ran the price up to fifty and had to quit. But we'll make it up. Here's Seven. That ought to help us. Brown had 430 there last trip."

"Collins 642, Brown 640," Goodwin announced after rapid calculation.

"The most significant figures thus far," Radbourne remarked. The mob outside agreed with him, and a series of shrill yells for Collins greeted the flashing figures on the screen. In vocal demonstrations, the Democratic candidate was a long favorite.

With varying fortune the returns came in until, at ten thirty, eleven wards had reported and only the crucial Ninth remained. The eleven gave Collins 6832, Brown

6798. In the last election Brown had carried Nine by one hundred and two.

"It will be a mighty close shave," Thornton said. "We haven't relied on much gain there, but I think there'll be some. I'll wager a box of cigars that the winner doesn't have more than twenty-five margin."

"Done," Haskell responded quickly.

"What do you think?"

"That Radbourne ought to play a game of pedro with me."

"Not in the mood," said Radbourne without looking up from an election sheet. "Why bother with cards when we have the excitement of a bigger game." He went on figuring. Presently the telephone was followed by Goodwin's announcement,—

"The missing link!"

He figured to a total, and slapped Radbourne on the back.

"We win," he said. "Brown carries Nine by twenty-five and Collins is elected by nine in a total of 13,648."

"How is the extra?" Radbourne asked.

"Be in shape in two minutes. It's all typed to this last ward, with alternate headlines."

"Then jam it through. We want to beat the *Globe* to-night and crow once or twice while we have a chance. A recount or something of the sort may disturb us."

Five minutes later the press began to turn for a horde of newsboys who shouted loud and long for "papys." The edition went forth, and the throng that had filled the office while returns were being received. Radbourne

declined all hospitality, and was finally left alone. Fruits of victory were already bitter with the taste of defeat. With incentive for concentrated effort removed, his mind reverted to the capitulation of the morrow — disgrace, it seemed to him. He sickened at the thought of announcing to his staff, who had so loyally supported him, that he was unable to offer them further employment. They had no warning of impending disaster, for he had deemed it prudent to keep his own counsel. Nowell and Norman had talked too much. But it was only a review of familiar ideas with added bitterness. Wearily he took his hat, and strolled aimlessly forth. He wanted to forget, and the club seemed the most convenient medium.

Few of his acquaintances were present when he entered. He passed them with a curt nod. Suddenly he felt aversion to society, and turned to go.

"Have one with me on election, Radbourne," called a man he knew.

"Can't. I've got to go home."

"Queer chap to act like that on the night of such a personal triumph as the election of Collins is to him," said the hospitable one, gazing blankly at the door through which he had disappeared.

"It makes the *Record*," another chimed in. "It's been a toss-up whether it would go under. In common decency the Democrats must finance it now. Radbourne's played a hard game, and won."

In his room Radbourne slept the sleep of exhaustion. He woke early next morning and walked for an hour before breakfast. He had a fancy that as undertaker at the *Record* obsequies he ought to be physically pre-

sentable. With that end in view he dressed with extreme care, not forgetting a boutonniere.

"You look like ready money," Goodwin observed, when he entered the office. "The win has a good effect on you. The morning papers endorse Collins's plurality, making it sixty-three. And they give license fifty-two majority."

"Good enough," Radbourne said unconcernedly. "Feature it strongly. I shall want to see you in about an hour, before making an announcement to the staff."

"A little post-election news?" the editor inquired with a shrewd fancy that he could guess the source of new backing.

"You've hit it."

In his own office, Radbourne endeavored painfully to frame a suitable address to the staff. But his mind refused obedience, and he abandoned the attempt impatiently. A pack of cards lay as he had left them. Absent-mindedly he began a game of solitaire.

He was thus occupied when Yardsley came breezily in.

"Morning," he said. "And quit that figuring on points. You finished that yesterday and did a good job, too. I tell you the boys are pleased to-day."

"I don't care much for the boys, but I'm glad I was able to do something for you with the paper."

"I came in to ante the week's salary," Yardsley remarked as he counted a roll of bills. "These weekly contributions haven't done much to put us on our feet, have they?"

"No," Radbourne admitted lugubriously. He could not be jaunty with Yardsley. Yardsley who had been his only financial friend.

"I've decided that anyway it wouldn't be policy to dribble money like this any longer."

"I guess you're right," Radbourne assented. "But I hope you feel that I've done my best."

"So I've concluded to do this," Yardsley continued, unheeding interruption. He handed a slip of paper to Radbourne, who looked at it listlessly. Then he looked at it incredulously.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Don't you understand?"

"This is a check for ten thousand."

"Just so. And with it I'm going to buy stock of the *Record*."

"I can't take it," Radbourne said presently. "I appreciate the motive, but you must not cripple yourself for such an uncertain thing as the *Record*. I know you can't afford this. You told me last week that it would be impossible for you to carry the payroll after election."

"And meant it, too. But things have changed some. I got this and a good deal more in New York. You see a wealthy man wanted to purchase experience, so we sold him our plant. I helped to soak him hard, thinking piously all the while, 'It's to save the *Record* and keep that long face of Radbourne's from reaching the floor.' After I've skinned a man for you, you can't refuse me a favor."

"But are you sure you won't need to use this money elsewhere?"

"Yes, devilish sure. And I want you to handle the paper just as you've handled it lately. If you need more money, I'm here with it. I got twenty times your slice for my share of the deal. We worked the angel for



keeps. I've got to go down the street now. You can have my stock ready when I come back." With a bang of the door he was gone.

For several minutes Radbourne gazed at the check in an effort to saturate his mind with a magical change of circumstance. Then he placed it in his pocket and telephoned for Goodwin.

"I wanted to give you an editorial pointer for to-day," he said when the editor appeared. "In noting the triumph of Democracy and reform, state plainly the *Record's* recent support of the Democratic ticket is not to be construed as stamping it a party organ. We remain independent, devoted to the people's interests under any flag. Now, if you will steer as many of the staff as you can collect towards the business office, I'll be obliged to you."

"All right," Goodwin answered. "I take it we are solid."

"Certainly."

When the staff had assembled, plainly somewhat apprehensive, Radbourne addressed them with none of the phraseology conned in an hour which already seemed long ago.

"Boys," he said simply, "I want to thank you for the way you stood by me in the fight we won yesterday. I'm grateful for your support when the town was against me. I can say that there is no likelihood of the bankruptcy you have heard prophesied, and I want you all to help me in building up the *Record* to first place in Fordport. Will you do it?"

"Damned if we won't!" ejaculated a shock-headed young reporter. Applausive murmurs indicated the

others endorsed his sentiment as they trooped back to work.

For the first time Radbourne noted the brightness of the morning. With quickened pulse the youngest editor in Fordport looked out upon his domain, his kingdom in fee. And as he looked memory inserted another slide. He saw Waterwick preparing for its winter sleep, no longer hatefully provincial, just a quaint old village. And there was an oldish man, a little stooped and rather gray, who would be reading his paper alone at the supper table. Sudden homesickness invaded Radbourne's heart. An apprentice lad bringing proof of the *Record's* editorial affirmation of independent policy found him poring over a time-table.

"Take the proof to Mr. Goodwin," he said. "And tell him I shall be away a few days."

He leaned back in his chair for a pleasant vision of the hour when, with a triumphant screech, the engine would round the curve, and with grinding brakes the train go sliding into Waterwick station. Zeke, the grizzled hackman, would be waiting, knocking the ashes from his favorite pipe. And here and there the lights would twinkle with smoke spiralling lazily into the twilight sky. He would be glad of some one's casual greeting, "Going to stay a spell?" After all, they were his own people.

"Lady to see you."

An office boy stood at his elbow. He came back to the present with a start.

"Is it any one you know?" he asked.

"Nope," the boy answered pithily. "She's a good looker," he volunteered with a grin.

"You can't keep me out," came a voice from the doorway.

"Miladi!"

It was only a word, but far more eloquent than he knew.

"Well?" she smiled. "Must you stand there, and I here? Won't you even offer me a chair?"

"Forgive me," he said, "I was so astonished. Here," to the boy, who gave them rapt attention, "take this to Mr. Goodwin."

"This" was a laundry bill, as the boy noted with a wise smile.

A moment of expectancy, of two souls seeking mutual adjustment, followed when they were alone:

"I suppose you wonder why I came."

"You don't know how grateful I am," he said earnestly.

"Wait a bit." Her tone was one of light raillery now. "I've come for a job."

"I don't understand." He faced her blankly.

"Why, the job you offered me last summer. Surely," with sudden plaintiveness, "you haven't forgotten that last night on the river."

"But you don't mean —"

"But I do mean. Unless, of course, you have changed your mind." He still hesitated. "Must I throw myself into your arms?"

Suddenly she was there, and the world was joyous. It might be fall without. In their hearts it was spring. Presently Radbourne took the lead.

"How did you know —" he began.

With playful impatience she took him by the shoulders.

"So my mathematical man must have the details. Of course, I know it all. I've known about you all the time. Now it's no harm for you to know your friend Mr. Dean is my uncle. And I think what he thinks,—that you're a 'very promising young man.' Fond as I am of you, Jim"—she used the diminutive with hesitant tenderness, "I couldn't marry you without knowing that. There's a passion for power in me. I could forgive a strong man a good deal. But I couldn't love a weak one. So I had to know."

He paid the natural tribute in happy confusion, and pursued his quest.

"Then you meant it last summer?"

"Within a week — if. I went away to give us both a chance. It might have taken years. I'm glad it's only months."

"You're a darling," he observed irrelevantly.

"A managing woman, I fear, Jim. See me already prying into your affairs."

"I was going out to Waterwick for a day or two," he explained, as she picked up a railroad ticket from his desk.

"Won't you take me with you?" She was wholly tender now. "I want to know your father. And I like little towns — well, for just a little while."

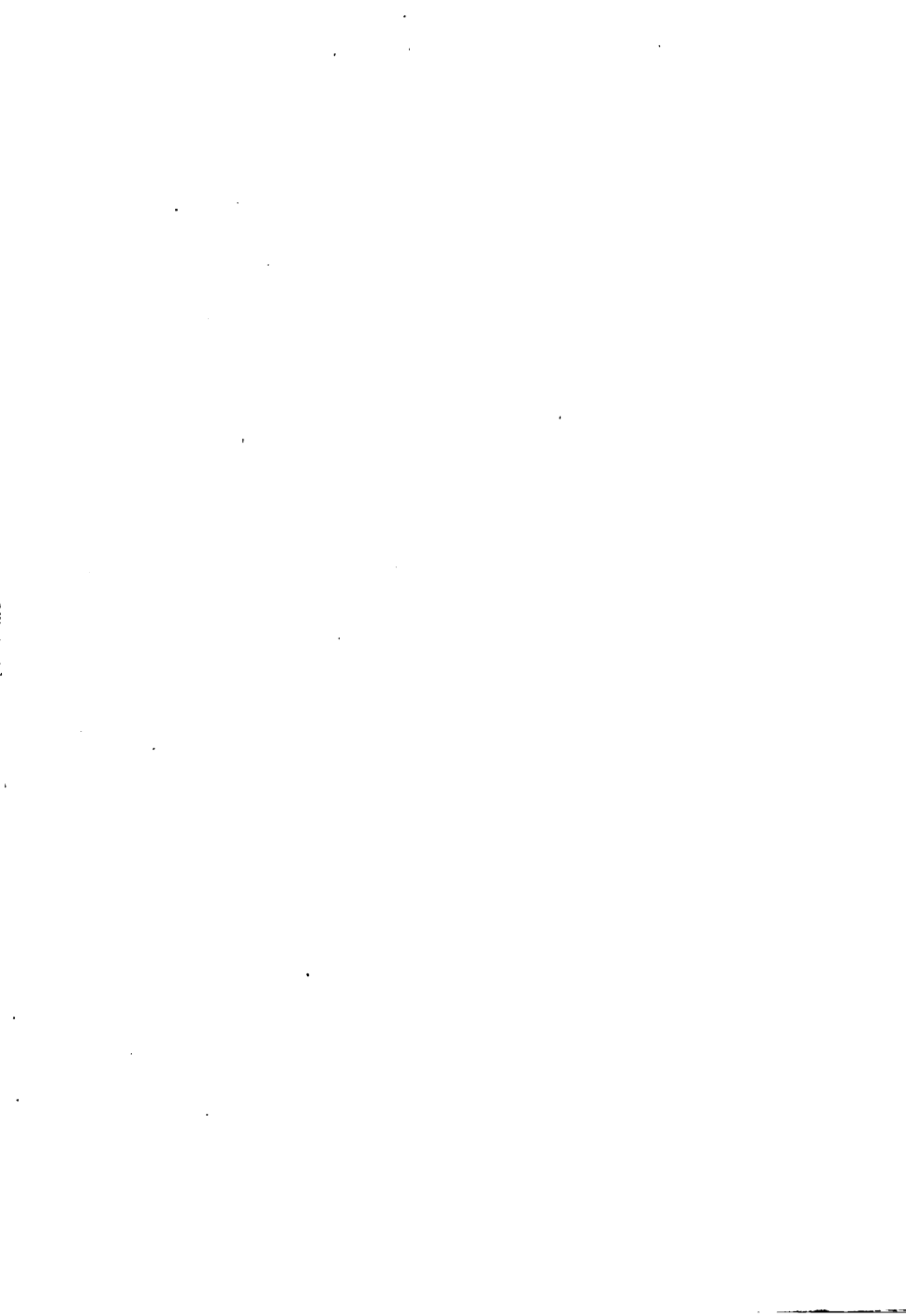
"Do you really want to go?"

"With all my heart."

He kissed her, with the eternal assurance,—“You're a wonderful girl.”

And they set forth together into the sunshine.





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